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Washtenaw Jewish News
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WASHTENAW
JEWISH NEWS

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Ann Arbor welcomes trailblazer Shahanna McKinney Baldon for January residency

By Deborah Meyers Greene

The Ann Arbor Jewish community has a special opportunity to welcome Shahanna McKinney Baldon, a recognized leader and cultural producer in the movement for visibility for Jews of Color, for a weekend residency on January 24 and 25. McKinney Baldon will participate in Shabbat services and deliver a public lecture, inviting attendees to engage with her work on Jewish diversity and history.

McKinney Baldon will be at Beth Israel Congregation to share songs and a d'var Torah at Shabbat services on the 24th.

On Sunday the 25th, U-M Associate Professor of Judaic Studies and History Bryan K. Robe will moderate McKinney Baldon in a public lecture: "Goldye di Shvartze Khaznte:

Black Woman Cantor of the Harlem Renaissance Era." All are welcomed to take advantage of these exceptional opportunities.

McKinney Baldon is widely credited for her prominent role in coining the term "Jews of Color" and advocating for greater inclusion and awareness in the Jewish world. "I didn't invent the term, but I was an early adopter — and I definitely was the first to advocate in print for use of the term," she said in a recent interview.

Later, McKinney Baldon founded Edot Midwest, the "Midwest regional Jewish diversity and racial justice collaborative," to help facilitate access to Jewish community life for Jews who are also People of Color. Her d'var Torah on Shabbat will incorporate themes from her work in this area.

"I continue to feel a huge sense of urgency around facilitating access to Jewish community life. Now more than ever, it is critically important that we 'lean in' on the ideas that Jews are diverse, we've always been diverse, and that our diversity is one of the great strengths as a Jewish people," McKinney Baldon said.

The Sunday lecture will focus on the remarkable life of Gladys Sellers, a con-

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Yahrzeit candle holder for AARC

By Emily Eisbruch

The Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation (AARC) is fortunate to have a special collection of ritual objects created by its talented congregants. At the high holidays last fall, Idelle Hammond-Sass, an artist, jewelry designer, and metalsmith, presented the congregation with yet another sacred object: a beautiful yahrzeit candle holder. A yahrzeit candle is a long-burning candle lit

to remember a loved one on the anniversary of their death.

I chatted with Idelle about the yahrzeit candle holder, how it came into being, and its significance.

Emily Eisbruch: Idelle, tell us about how the idea came about for you to create a yahrzeit candle holder for the AARC.

Idelle Hammond-Sass: The idea really originated with Rav Gavrielle. She invited me to create it for the ritual of lighting a community yahrzeit candle on Erev Yom Kippur. She saw this an opportunity for an artisan in the community to contribute to hiddur mitzvah — the elevating and beautifying of a mitzvah or cherished ritual — and to embody the DIY and collaborative spirit that defines our Reconstructionist community.

EE: Tell us about your research and creative process

IH-S: I use a metalsmithing technique called "fold forming." It is a process that can transform metal with hammering, folding and unfolding, repeating the process to create amazing complex forms. I also used this technique to create the Ner Tamid (eternal light) I made for the AARC Torah ark. Part of experimenting with fold forms means you can fold paper to plan

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Schmaltz debuts "The Seltzer Man" at The Ark

Schmaltz's debut release, *The Seltzer Man*, highlights what music listeners love: creative compositions, incredible improvisation, and the undeniable energy of a roaring horn section.

With a unique sound that hinges on craftily blended genres, Schmaltz provides a refreshing perspective on klezmer, infusing Jewish traditions with contemporary flavor by mixing in elements of jazz, funk, Balkan brass band, Latin, and polka. Having met at the University of Michigan, the group features numerous alumni of the School of Music Theater & Dance, including bandleader and primary composer Ryan Schildcrout (saxophones), Michael Gerace (trombone), and current SMTD protégé Christopher Gerace (trumpet). Rounding out the ensemble, the rhythm section includes U-M LSA alumni and Ann Arbor native Jack Harris (drums), Myles Murphy (piano), and Washington, D.C.-based Andrew Schildcrout (bass guitar).

This Tuesday, January 6, Schmaltz will bring a ruckus flare to Ann Arbor's most iconic venue: The Ark. Known worldwide for its intimate listening room, it is the perfect stage for a celebration of the physical release o*f The Seltzer Man,* released digitally on December 19, 2025. The band is thrilled to welcome past and present collaborators as special guests to join in on the revelry, including Jacob Warren, Grant Flick,

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From the editor

A review of WJN's 2025

I spent the morning browsing through the 2025 issues of *WJN*, just to see what popped out.

Early in the year, the paper began a monthly page devoted to environmental activism of the A2 Jewish Climate Circle; the Jewish Federation began advertising for a community trip to Israel that had to be cancelled because of "ongoing uncertainty" in the region; Rabbi Asher Lopatin of the Federation's Jewish Community Relations Council organized and went on a few fascinating trips to Israel and Syria; Jewish Storytime at AADL became a regular thing; our obituary section seemed to get longer and longer; Jewish Family Services, JCOR, and many in the community stepped up direct help and advocacy for new immigrants; Hebrew Day School and Chabad of Ann Arbor celebrated 50 years in Ann Arbor (the 50th for Genesis was in 2024); *WJN* published a multipart examination of the history of local Jewish communal fundraising for Israel; the new Jews of Color Network held many activities; several chapters of Lauren Zinn's *Belong to the World, Bring Your Tribe* graced the pages; a poem in almost every issue!; Ari Smith began contributing profiles and news reports; the new Wallenberg Institute at UMich launched the Samantha Woll Dialogue Series; and the Amster Gallery at the JCC stepped up their showing of local artists.

I was reminded that our Washtenaw Jewish community is filled with musicians, artists, writers, athletes, scholars, and activists. The *WJN* reports on such a small percentage of all the things you do.

The staff of our congregations and legacy organizations do an outstanding (and much appreciated) job of sending the *WJN* news of their events. I know it is harder for the creatives, researchers, and social and political activists who are not working for or with established organizations to find the time to inform the *WJN* of your activities. So, I am writing here to remind you, all of you, this newspaper and its readers really value knowing

what you are doing, creating, planning and thinking.

I'm looking forward to Tu b'Shvat, the Jewish New Year of the Trees, which this year starts on the evening of February 1. It is my favorite holiday because it is so full of life, in nature and in symbol, in myth and in history. Recently I reconnected with one of my favorite people in the world, Flora Rudolph, through her endeavor "Meeting Trees: A Life Changing Connection" (meetingtrees.com). Tu b'Shvat is a perfect time to check out her offerings and also to especially appreciate our local arbors. ■

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Country Valley Farm is expanding our offerings! In addition to our 30-week summer CSA, we're introducing a **15-week Winter & Early Spring CSA Share** starting **January 11, 2026**.

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Check out our website:
www.countryvalleyfarm.com or Email Adam Mitchel with any questions: countryvalleyinfo@gmail.com

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Phone numbers, websites, and addresses of organizations frequently listed in the calendar:

Ann Arbor Orthodox Minyan (AAOM): 1429 Hill Street, 248-408-3269, annarborminyan.org
Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation (AARC): 2935 Birch Hollow Drive, 734-445-1910, aarecon.org
Beth Israel Congregation (BIC): 2000 Washtenaw Ave, 734-665-9897, bethisraelaa.org
Chabad House: 715 Hill Street, 734-995-3276, jewmich.com
Eastern Michigan University Center for Jewish Studies (EMU): www.emich.edu/jewish-studies/
Frankel Center: 202 S. Thayer St., lsa.umich.edu/judaic/
Jewish Community Center (JCC): 2935 Birch Hollow Drive, 745-971-0990, jccannarbor.org
Jewish Cultural Society (JCS): 2935 Birch Hollow Drive, 734-975-9872, jewishculturalsociety.org
Jewish Family Services (JFS): 2245 South State Street, 734-769-0209, jfsannarbor.org
Jewish Federation: 2939 Birch Hollow Drive, 734-677-0100, jewishannarbor.org
Pardes Hannah: 2010 Washtenaw Ave, 734-761-5324, pardeshannah.org
Temple Beth Emeth (TBE): 2309 Packard Road, 734-665-4744, templebethemeth.org
UM Hillel: 1429 Hill Street 734-769-0500, michiganhillel.org

Resilience in the digital world: Teaching kids critical thinking

By Esther Greenfield Jakar and Orit Aviran

Technology is everywhere in our children's world, and the easy answer would be to block apps and set strict screen time limits. But real resilience doesn't come from restrictions — it comes from helping students understand what they're encountering online and how to navigate it thoughtfully. At Hebrew Day School, as part of our school-wide focus on resilience this year, we're teaching students to engage intentionally with technology and think critically about their digital lives. We're sharing our framework here — five practical steps you can use at home:

Learning to notice what you feel

When children learn to pause and identify their feelings, they develop the skill of discernment: What is this content trying to make me feel? What emotional response is it designed to trigger? Is this showing the full picture, or just one angle? By asking themselves, "Does this make me angry? Does it pull me to keep watching? Does something feel off?" students begin building the self-awareness they need to go online safely.

Spotting what's real (and what's not)

With AI-generated content fooling even adults, our kids need help figuring out what's real. We teach students to ask: Who posted this? Where did it come from? Does this make sense? What does the creator want from me? In technology classes, students practice using AI as a learning tool, not a replacement for thinking. They ask AI the same question in different ways and compare answers, challenge it on topics they know well to spot errors, and find stories on different platforms to check for proof. These questions connect directly to our core value of Academic Excellence & Discovery — actively asking questions and developing the analytical tools and critical thinking to navigate this rapidly changing information landscape.

Building trust through data

Instead of surveillance, we suggest weekly check-ins where families review screen time data together. One parent shared how showing her daughter the numbers — without lecturing — transformed their dynamic: "The argument was over. There's something real about seeing the facts right there."

Building trust together, understanding that perception and reality don't always match, and using data to have honest conversations is a key step in healthy use of technology.

When screens eclipse real life

Spending time online isn't inherently bad, but when digital life eclipses real-world hobbies, relationships, and activities that fulfill us, we need to pay attention. Not with shame or rules alone, but by helping children understand their own patterns.

Notice what activities your child loves that don't involve screens. Better yet, join in and model balance. That's where sustainable habits form. We are happy to offer support through our "Parenting for Resilience" series, led by Dr. Beth Pearson, our school psychologist, and designed to support parental challenges in building age-appropriate independence.

The gift of intention

Teaching children to be safe online doesn't require becoming tech experts. It means talking to them, teaching them to think for themselves, and showing them we're there for them. When children learn to notice their feelings, question what they see, understand their digital footprint, and consider the impact of what they share, we're giving them tools for life — both online and off.

Keep these conversations collaborative and non-judgmental. Let your children into your own dialogue about healthy tech use. Model good practices. And remember: resilience in the digital age isn't about rigid rules — it's about building flexible, critical thinkers who can exercise good judgment to navigate whatever comes next.

For more information about Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor, visit hdsaa.org or contact office@hdsaa.org. ■

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Breakfast with Israeli Rabbi Arik Ascherman

By Leonore Mohill Gerstein

Ann Arbor friends of Torat Tzedek's Rabbi Arik Ascherman invite the community to learn about his current projects on Sunday, January 25. Rabbi Ascherman will join us on Zoom.

In recent months, our anguish over the catastrophic events of October 7, 2023, and the subsequent years of war in Gaza has also included greater awareness of escalating violence in the Occupied Territories (the Israeli-controlled area from East Jerusalem to the Jordan river, also known as the West Bank). Throughout this region, Jewish outposts and settlements continue to proliferate. With increasing virulence, nationalistic settlers unleash violent attacks on the 3.4 million local Palestinians with near impunity. These mostly young religious males accost Palestinians in their fields and villages, set fire to homes, orchards, and fields, steal livestock, intimidate, injure and, at times, expel the populace. Their aim is to force as many Palestinians as possible to leave the area permanently.

Those among us who feel we must not turn away from such wrongdoing search for a way to effectively oppose the Israeli administration's short-sighted violations of human rights in the areas under its control. In this spirit, members of the Ann Arbor Jewish community are aware of human rights and peaceful coexistence organizations in Israel and have maintained a relationship with American-born Rabbi Arik Ascherman for over two decades. While we may not be able to act "on the ground," we can give material and moral support to Israeli human rights organizations, knowing that our commitment to them makes a difference.

Rabbi Arik Ascherman

After 20 years as head of Rabbis for Human Rights, Rabbi Ascherman founded Torat Tzedek (the Torah of Justice) in 2017. As its spiritual and pragmatic leader, Rabbi Arik is guided by a vision of justice grounded in Jewish religious texts. He concentrates on tipping the scales toward what is just, often working to resolve less-known human rights crises. All of his interventions are pragmatic; some take great courage. At present, he devotes much of his energy protecting Palestinian villagers and shepherds. Convinced that there are times when "we must defend our fellow human beings with our bodies," he regularly joins the Palestinian villagers when they are attacked. In October and November 2025, settlers unleashed a pogrom, torching the homes in the Palestinian village of Mukhmas. Refusing to abandon their ancestral home, the residents asked Rabbi Ascherman and his volunteers to help them rebuild. Currently, this is Torat Tzedek's primary project. Directly related is Rabbi Ascherman's effort to recruit a corps of international volunteers to be present day and night in beleaguered Palestinian villages.

In support of the work of Torat Tzedek, members of the Ann Arbor Jewish community are hosting a breakfast gathering at the Jewish Community Center on Sunday, January 25, 9:30 a.m.–noon. A panel of local supporters of Ascherman and Torat Tzedek will discuss his current projects, providing historical and philosophical context. *Rabbi Ascherman will join us from Israel via Zoom to discuss his work and respond to questions from the audience.*

While the breakfast is free and no reservations are required, our intent is to raise needed funds for Rabbi Ascherman's work. We are grateful for all donations given in the spirit of tikkun olam, repairing the world. Co-sponsoring organizations include Temple Beth Emeth and the social action committee of Beth Israel Congregation. Please direct your questions to Deb Schild debschild@gmail.com, Martha Kransdorf mkransdo@umich.edu, or Leonore Mohill Gerstein Lbmgerst@gmail.com. ■

"Neighbor 2 Novel Community Book Club" connection through stories

Jewish Family Service of Washtenaw County (JFS) is proud to announce the launch of the Neighbor 2 Novel Community Book Club, a new initiative designed to bring neighbors together through the power of literature. This program creates a welcoming space where people from all backgrounds can explore diverse stories, voices, and experiences, building empathy, understanding, and a stronger sense of community.

The Neighbor 2 Novel Community Book Club is more than just a reading group. It is a movement to celebrate shared humanity and foster meaningful dialogue. Through thoughtfully selected books, the book club will highlight themes such as kindness and compassion, belonging and inclusion, and friendship and connection, while also amplifying cultural and identity narratives, justice and resilience stories, and works that inspire personal growth and community action.

JFS' goal is to create a space where every voice matters. Books have the power to open hearts and minds, and JFS aims to use that power to strengthen the bonds within the community. Books will be selected for adults, youth, and children, creating opportunities for families to read together. Parents are encouraged to read to their children, making this a shared experience across generations. Books will be chosen quarterly to give everyone time to obtain and enjoy them, and each quarter will feature activities based on the selected themes and titles. These engagement opportunities will offer a meaningful way to connect, learn, and grow together as a community.

Join us on Sunday, January 11, at 2:30 p.m. for a kickoff event in partnership with Temple Beth Emeth where you will meet the author of our first Neighbor 2 Novel book, *Isabela's Way* by Barbara Stark-Nemon.

Neighbor 2 Novel invites community members to join this exciting initiative, whether as a reader or a supporter. Together, we can create a space where stories spark understanding and connection.

To sign up to receive more information, visit https://bit.ly/3KOJjYP. ■

Jewish Federation welcomes new finance director

By Rachel Wall, Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor

The Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor is thrilled to welcome Teri Anderson to its professional team as Finance Director. Teri began in this role in November 2025.

A lifelong Michigander, Teri comes to the Federation with more than 20 years of finance and human resource experience in the tech and not-for-profit industries. She has previously worked for global Ann Arbor-based company Llamasoft, and most recently served as Finance and Accounting Project Manager for a firm providing accounting services to nonprofit, public, and private organizations. Teri's areas of expertise include project management, financial planning and analysis, and strategic use of technology in nonprofit and start-up organizations, in addition to banking and general accounting.

Teri Anderson

"I'm looking forward to working more deeply on the community and philanthropic aspects of the Federation's mission, in addition to all its various programs. I love learning new things and have already really enjoyed getting to know the Jewish community and all the ways it operates in Ann Arbor."

Teri joined the Jewish Federation's professional team as Chief Financial Officer Robert Deschaine retired at the end of 2025. The Jewish Federation wishes Rob the very best as he moves into the next chapter of his life, after serving as Controller and then CFO at the Federation for six years. His contributions in the areas of financial accountability and sustainable systems have set the organization up for success.

Jewish Federation CEO Eileen Freed recognizes the legacy Rob leaves behind, noting, "Rob has left big shoes to fill, and we will miss him immensely. At the same time, we're thrilled that Teri brings her own exceptional track record and fresh ideas to carry forward our work in the community."

Outside of work, Teri enjoys gardening, animals, and cooking. She particularly takes pleasure in long walks in nature, even at night during the winter. Teri can be reached at teri@jewishannarbor.org. ■

Feature

The Thursday Night Group: Women's liberation at the UM

By Morgan Hesse

On November 12, 2025, the University of Michigan's Inclusive History Project (IHP) hosted the second event in their "Outsiders, Insiders, Radicals, and Reformers: A History of Jews at the University of Michigan" series, "Women's Liberation at the University of Michigan, 1968–72." The event featured activists Gayle Rubin, Rayna Rapp, Ellen Meeropol, Beth Schneider, and Joanne Parrent, and was co-hosted by U-M's Jewish Communal Leadership Program (JCLP). As the overarching series seeks to document a comprehensive history of the University of Michigan, this panel was a reunion of some of the women who played fundamental roles in the feminist movement taking off in Ann Arbor. Karla Goldman, director of the JCLP, moderated the panel, beginning with each woman summarizing their activist experiences during their time at the University of Michigan. The panelists opened up to the audience of over 100, reflecting considerately and deeply on their experiences at U-M

Back Row, left to right: Professor Debra Dash Moore, Professor Karla Goldman Front Row, left to right: Beth Schneider, Gayle Rubin, Joanne Parrent, Rayna Rapp, Ellen Meeropol

Vietnam teach-in

Rayna Rapp, professor and associate chair of anthropology at New York University, started her time at the University of Michigan as an undergraduate in 1964. Rapp described herself as having "civil rights and anti-war built into [her] bones," sharing her experiences being politically active as an undergraduate at U-M both on and off campus. With her college roommates, Rapp "worked on the Diag serving coffee at the world's historic first teach-in on Vietnam," one of the many ways in which Rapp immersed herself in U-M's political sphere. In addition to the powerful feeling which came from forming some of the first consciousness-raising (CR) groups at the university, Rapp acknowledged the fear which she and her peers experienced amid the violence occurring nationally and internationally: "We walked around with our stomachs clutched permanently, 24/7. We were so frightened that we would also be the people being shot in the streets." Despite this uncertainty, Rapp and her fellow students continued to make strides forward for the feminist movement, teaching foundational courses in women's studies at U-M and emphasizing women's education as a means of societal movement and power.

CR groups

Joanne Parrent, co-founder of the Feminist Federal Credit Union, attended the University of Michigan from 1966 to 1969 and was, similarly to Rapp, frustrated by the way women were purposely shut out of conversations happening in activist groups trying to end the Vietnam War. "For some of us, the idea that women should be seen but not heard didn't sit too well, so before long I was part of a women's group with these women on this panel today," Parrent said, "and what a relief to be in a group of all women. We could talk without being ignored and without being interrupted." While she went on to acknowledge how these smaller groups were part of the larger national feminist movement, these smaller CR groups provided intentional spaces designed to uplift women's voices, a value which Parrent continued to exemplify in her work with the Women's Movement in Detroit. There, her CR group wrote "the Fourth World Manifesto about the need for an independent women's movement" and she became involved in consent education and abortion access projects happening nationwide.

Unrecognized labor

As a graduate student in "a world without women," Beth Schneider, professor emerita in UC Santa Barbara's sociology department, described realizing during her time at U-M that women were held to "a set of expectations about what we were able to accomplish and what we could do" which led to women leaving the world of academia after pursuing a graduate degree at most. There was little support for women who intended to stay in academia — most left to teach and enter the labor force. However, she found herself at U-M "dying for the excitement of a place where there was a lot going on" and therefore fully enmeshing herself in all of the political activism occurring on campus from Black liberation movements to Ann Arbor Draft Resistance. Through her work with the draft resistance, she shared how she became a part of the CR groups which provided spaces for women to "work with each other … [and] care for each other" while they put in hours of unrecognized labor for the men in their lives — whom they loved in a different way. Schneider went on to reflect on personal relationships, stressing how they can bring both tension and benefits to political progress, all of which are necessary to move forward societally.

SDS and women

Thinking on a similar note about personal relationships impacting one's political consciousness, author Ellen Meeropol shared her experience dating and eventually marrying the son of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg. Reading his parents' death house correspondence "deeply, profoundly affected me," Meeropol said, "as an American, as a Jew. The rulers murdered Robbie's parents … and they could come for us." With this mindset, Meeropol became deeply invested in activism during her time at U-M, attending meetings of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and discussing with fellow panelist Rapp what it meant to be a woman in SDS. Together, the women began asking why they weren't full members of the organization and why they weren't listened to. Meeropol began to consider "how [their] kind of sisterhood meshed with [their] strong politics about class and anti-racism," embracing the importance of both educating and empowering women. Not only was Meeropol part of teach-ins, but she was also part of projects which worked to provide childcare, rape prevention programs, and abortion/birth control access initiatives, holistically forging a way forward for women in society.

The Thursday Night Group

Gayle Rubin, associate professor of anthropology and women's studies at U-M, shared how her experience in activism started by advocating against parietal rules in the women's dormitories. "We were all nerds and geeks [in the honors dorm] and we were just horrified that the boys could stay at the library studying longer than we could," Rubin said. She explained how, as a house, the women she lived with banded together to find loopholes in the rules, breaking curfew collectively and demonstrating a power simply through their togetherness. "We were, in effect, the local version of these feminist consciousness-raising groups that were popping up all over the place … I think we were the first one that got traction and lasted more than a meeting or two." Rubin emphasized the impact of that women's CR group, the Thursday Night Group, going on to share how she became a founding member of the local branch of Radical Lesbians and a group of female scholars supporting each other as they continued to pursue academia.

When asked to reflect on the event, students shared that they felt inspired by the women and called to continue having conversations about injustice. Reflections emphasized the importance of collective engagement and working together to promote equality. The panel, co-presented by the U-M Inclusive History Project and the Jewish Communal Leadership Program, allowed for a deep look into the role which these U-M alumni played in the activist movements of the mid to late 20th century.

To continue engaging with the Inclusive History Project, the exhibition "Visual History of the Unions" is on display at the Michigan Union until December 17. See https://inclusivehistory.umich.edu/event/visual-history-of-the-unions-exhibition/ for more details. If you are considering a Master's in Social Work and are interested in working alongside Jewish communities to address broad social concerns in a 21st-century context, feel free to contact jclp.info@umich.edu to learn more about the Jewish Communal Leadership Program. ■

The Jewish Communal Leadership Program with Beth Schneider, Gayle Rubin, Joanne Parrent, Rayna Rapp, Ellen Meeropol

Shahanna McKinney continue from page 1

temporary of Golda Meir in Milwaukee, who became known as Madame Goldye Steiner or "Goldye di Shvartze Khaznte" (Goldye, the Colored Woman Cantor) in 1920s New York City.

Steiner was one of the very few women, and the only African American woman, singing *khazones,* or Ashkenazi liturgical music, during the "golden age" of the genre. McKinney Baldon rediscovered Steiner's story, located her unmarked grave, and led a successful fundraiser with The Wisconsin Black Historical Society/Museum to purchase a marker for her. McKinney Baldon will share how she used historical research and online genealogy tools to trace the rest of Steiner's life after her last documented performance.

"I have been honored to help steward the retelling of Madame Goldye's story," McKinney Baldon said, citing the significance of Steiner's story, and also the significance of its retelling.

In addition to research, teaching, and publishing, McKinney Baldon's efforts have included concerts and performances. Her Ann Arbor visit will actually occur on the heels of a historical concert, "Return of the Immortal Khazntes," at Yiddish New York 2025. The concert, part of the "Khazones Underground" project, is the "album release" celebration for a recording giving voice to the *khazntes* — women who sang *khazones* during the golden age period. McKinney Baldon is one of the album's four featured artists.

January's residency provides an important opportunity for the Ann Arbor community to learn about the history — and the present — of Jewish diversity, and engage with the ongoing work of creating a more inclusive community. For information and to get involved, write to jewsofcolorannarbor@gmail.com.

The events will be sponsored by The Network | Jewish People of Color of Greater Ann Arbor. Co-sponsors include the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor Community Engagement Fund, the U-M Frankel Center for Judaic Studies, Beth Israel Congregation, and Edot Midwest.r. ■

Yahrzeit Candle Holder continue from page 1

a fold or create variations. Some of these can be very interesting in their own right. I was doing a little research on paper folds and found a folded seven-point star in a book which I knew could be modified to be a six-point star. Using a piece of bristol board I measured it out, adapting it from the original seven-point form. It looked like two triangles attached at the long edge. I then measured one-inch segments and folded them back and forth, like an accordion. I added an additional inch to overlap in the front. This determined how much metal I would use.

EE: What were the materials and did you have any challenges in creating the candle holder?

IH-S: I first made a copper model to see how the glass candle holder would fit. It needed to be longer to accommodate the thickness of the metal and the glass insert. First, I priced it in sterling silver which turned out to be fairly expensive, so I began to look for other alternatives. I ultimately decided to use NuGold, a brass alloy often called Jewelers Brass. I wanted the interior to have a golden glow and reflect the candle.

EE: At Kol Nidre Services in October 2025, you dedicated this yahrzeit candle holder to an AARC founder and longtime friend Evelyn Neuhaus, z"l, who passed away in February 2025. Tell us about the connection you felt between this special object and Evelyn.

IH-S: Evelyn and I met in a Hebrew class, and she was an important friend over many years. I was unable to attend her funeral and honor her, so this was something I wanted to do. She had many close friends in the AARC congregation and in the community and made spirituality and Jewish learning a priority in her life. The yahrzeit candle radiates the inner light of the person we are remembering; this is what the golden glow represents within the object.

EE: How do you see the yahrzeit candle holder being used by the congregation?

IH-S: I imagine it will be available to use especially at times of remembrance such as Yizkor, but will be used at other services as the congregation and Rabbi decide.

EE: What else would you like to share about this gift to the congregation?

IH-S: I've made other ritual objects for our AARC congregation including our yad (Torah pointer), a crown for a Megillah holder made by Alan Haber, and the Ner Tamid (eternal light) called "Forest Dawn" which sits atop the Torah Ark. All of these are specific to our congregation as they were intentionally made for AARC. I don't use the Star of David often, although I did use it on the end of the Yad which was a triangle and offered that very naturally. In this yahrzeit holder, the Star of David becomes the space to hold the memorial candle. I see it as the whole community holding the space for the person(s) we are remembering, embracing them with love and respect for who they were to us as a community.

To learn more about Idelle's artwork, see her website at http://www.idellehammond-sass.com. To see photos of the AARC's beautiful ritual objects visit https://aarecon.org/sacred-objects.

AARC Events for January

The AARC is a caring, inclusive, and music-loving community of people who want to practice and study Judaism or simply be around people who share a commitment to Judaism's values. The AARC's spiritual leader, Rav Gavrielle Pescador, is known for her warmth, her collaborative spirit, and her incredible voice and harp playing. You are invited to visit https://aarecon.org/ or email info@aarecon.org to learn more about the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation.

January 10
Second Saturday Morning Shabbat Service. Meditation with Anita Rubin-Meiller 10 a.m. This is a hybrid Shabbat Service led by our Rabbi, Gabrielle Pescador, at the JCC and on Zoom. Zoom link will be sent out the week before the event. 10:30 a.m.–12 p.m.

January 11
Book Club. We will be discussing *The World That We Knew* by Alice Hoffman. For more information about the Book Club meeting and the amazing lunch that precedes it, email Greg gsaltzman@albion.edu. 1–2 p.m.

January 17
Pop-In Torah Study on Zoom. This is an hour led by our Rabbi. 7–8 p.m.

January 21
Rosh Chodesh Shevat Minyan. 9–10 a.m.

January 26
Fourth Friday Kabbalat Shabbat. This is a hybrid service led by Rabbi Gabrielle Pescador in person at the JCC and on Zoom. Everyone is welcome! Service is followed by a nut-free potluck. 6:30 p.m.r. ■

Schmaltz debuts continues from page 1

Seulah Noh, Jack Moody, and Andrés Soto, among others.

Now into their third year, Schmaltz is well established as one of Southeast Michigan's klezmer powerhouses. They are seen frequently at synagogues, bars, jazz clubs, and as part of a monthly residency at The North Star Lounge in Ann Arbor.

In 2024, Schmaltz helped pilot Michigan's own klezmer festival: "Klezmitten," which will mark its third year in 2026. Drawing upon rich traditions, their music seamlessly bridges styles and pushes the boundaries of klezmer as we once knew it.

Given the inherent spontaneity of each Schmaltz performance, the Tuesday, January 6, show at The Ark will not be one to miss.

Dr. Arik Cheshin r. ■

Turnkey Bioresearch Lab Available
Owner retiring. Lab is well equipped and supplied for anaerobic and aerobic microbiology. Small but efficient layout in commercially-zoned building. Includes main lab; office/storage room; bathroom; food/eating area. Very low operating cost. Accommodate two workers. Manchester, MI. Lease lab & contents or purchase assets. Happy to assist startup. Contact Steve.
info@microberesearch.com

B'nei Mitzvah at AARC

By Rabbi Gabrielle Pescador

This year, the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation (AARC) is delighted to have four students at the b'nei mitzvah stage of their Jewish journey, and to have the opportunity to form a cohort — a model that allows our students to learn together, support one another, and build community as they prepare for this special milestone in their lives.

The cohort began their journey this past spring with Hebrew Boot Camp led by veteran religious school educator Aviva Panush. In the 2025–26 fall/spring semesters, the students are continuing their studies with me, strengthening their Hebrew decoding skills, deepening their understanding of the Shabbat morning service, creating their own b'nei mitzvah projects, and exploring what it truly means to embrace Jewish life and values on their own terms.

A major focus of the year will be learning both the structure and the thematic elements of the Shabbat morning service — gratitude, praise, deep listening, personal reflection, connecting with Torah in a deeply personal way, and committing to doing good. My hope is for the cohort to co-lead their b'nei mitzvah service with me, not only to build skills and confidence, but to help them experience themselves as spiritual leaders within our community. This approach is especially meaningful within a Reconstructionist community, where collaborative leadership is a core value.

To engage the students creatively, I invite them to choose melodies they love. Students will also have the opportunity to play musical instruments during the service, if that brings them joy, to add extra richness to the already collaborative and uplifting energy of AARC's prayer landscape. Jack Kessler z"l, my beloved teacher and director of ALEPH's Cantorial Studies Program, used to say that music helps people "have fun in shul," a pearl of wisdom that I take very seriously. When our young members experience joy in prayer and spiritual community, their post-B'nei Mitzvah engagement will hopefully become more natural and enduring.

The cohort is also learning how to craft a d'var Torah. Each student is invited to explore their Torah portion by identifying what they find meaningful, inspiring, or even challenging. In wrestling with the text — its beauty, its complexity, and its questions — students begin to discover their own values and what feels important or compelling to them. This process helps them develop a personal relationship with Torah and a thoughtful, authentic voice in interpreting tradition and finding its relevance in their daily lives.

Each student also works individually with their Torah chanting coach, Deb Kraus. Deb not only teaches trop (the cantillation patterns for Torah and Haftarah) but also guides the students in translating and interpreting their Haftarah portions into contemporary English. Our community takes great pride in our unique custom of having our students chant their own interpretive English rendition on their special day.

The goal of this cohort model is to nurture community-building not only for the students, but also for their families. The shared journey offers opportunities for families to support and deepen their relationships with one another through this rite of passage, and feel more connected to the congregation as a whole.

The cohort also enriches the wider AARC community. Younger students in the AARC Beit Sefer (religious school), with director Shlomit Cohen, witness their older peers taking on leadership roles — reading Torah, leading prayers, offering teachings — and can begin to imagine themselves in those roles. Our hope is that this visibility sparks excitement and a sense of belonging, helping younger students look forward to their own future b'nei mitzvah journeys. And of course, it is only natural for the older generation to kvell (take pride and delight) over the accomplishments of our youth and to be encouraged by the planting of seeds for future community-building.

On a personal note, it is particularly meaningful to me to have the opportunity to be part of the process of nurturing our youth — guiding their learning, celebrating their questions, and witnessing their growth. According to our tradition, this is a form of sacred communal birthing. As our sages teach, "One who teaches another's child Torah is regarded as though they had given birth to them" (Sanhedrin 19b). I am so grateful for the privilege of getting to know the minds and hearts of these young people and of helping shepherd them to enter the next stage of their Jewish lives.

To learn more about the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation, please visit https://aarecon.org/ or email info@aarecon.org. . ■

Jewish Federation's Women's Philanthropy: A legacy of empowerment and connection

By Kadi Swerdlow, Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor

Women enjoying the Jewish Federation's February 2025 Champagne and Charcuterie social event. The 2026 edition of this event will be Chocolates and Community: A Galen-

The Women's Philanthropy program of the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor was built on giving women ownership of their money and empowerment in finances, and allowing women a voice in shaping their community. It also provides an opportunity for women to connect with one another in meaningful Jewish community.

The greater Ann Arbor community offers a vibrant array of women's activities that enable participants to connect, unwind, and find joy and friendship. Women's programs include social events, personal growth opportunities, conversations on difficult topics, and group volunteer opportunities. Some events to look forward to in 2026 include a volunteer partnership with Jewish Family Services, the annual Schmooze and Booze cocktails and conversation event, and educational programs on financial planning for retirement and navigating aging and menopause.

On Thursday, February 12, the Women's Philanthropy calendar kicks off 2026 with a night of fun, sweets, and sisterhood. At Chocolates & Community: A Galentine's Day Soiree, participants will learn to make and mold chocolate, creating a variety box of their own to take home while enjoying food and mocktails. Tickets for this pre-Valentine's Day event will be available on jlive.app and will cost $36. Proceeds will go to support barrier-free activities for those in need in the local Jewish community.

The legacy of philanthropic giving from women remains an important through line in women's programming from the Jewish Federation. In particular, the Lions of Judah ($5,000) and Pomegranate ($1,800) Giving Societies recognize women who have made a financial contribution to the Jewish Federation's Annual Community Campaign as women. By choosing to invest in the community under their own name, these generous community members gain access to regional and national leadership development opportunities, in addition to the mitzvah of supporting the community. To explore how your Women's Philanthropy donation can make the most meaningful difference, contact the Jewish Federation's Impact and Engagement Manager, Kadi Swerdlow, at kadi@jewishannarbor.org.

The Women's Philanthropy department at the Jewish Federation is always seeking fresh ideas and faces. If you have an event idea, would like to volunteer to bring your philanthropy to life, or might want to join a planning committee, contact Kadi Swerdlow.

To stay up to date on and register for upcoming service, social, and educational events, check out jewishannarbor.org/engagement/womens-programs or jlive.app. ■

Feature

Three Ann Arbor teens selected for JCC Maccabi Leadership Board

By Drew Coel, Marketing and Program Associate, Ann Arbor JCC

Following the amazing accomplishments of our athletes at the 2025 JCC Maccabi Campus Games in Pittsburgh, the largest Jewish teen engagement program in the world, Team Ann Arbor-Nahalal has already had a very strong start to this new cycle in preparation for the 2026 Games in Toronto.

At the beginning of September, JCC Association opened applications for the 2025–2026 JCC Maccabi International Leadership Board. This prestigious program is an opportunity for athletes from around the globe to come together and develop leadership abilities and learn how to shape the JCC Maccabi program. In addition, they will gain skills in team collaboration, communication strategies, and relationship building.

JCC Association received an abundance of applications from teens all over the world who had previously participated in the JCC Maccabi program and who plan to do so again in 2026. In the end, only 26 applicants were selected for the International Leadership Board.

Three members of Team Ann Arbor-Nahalal — Joshua Dorfman, Sydney Sharkey, and Guy Weizer — all of whom are entering their third consecutive year with the delegation, were chosen to sit on the board. Team Ann Arbor-Nahalal is the only delegation to have three members selected for the board, the highest number of members from a single delegation.

Guy Weizer

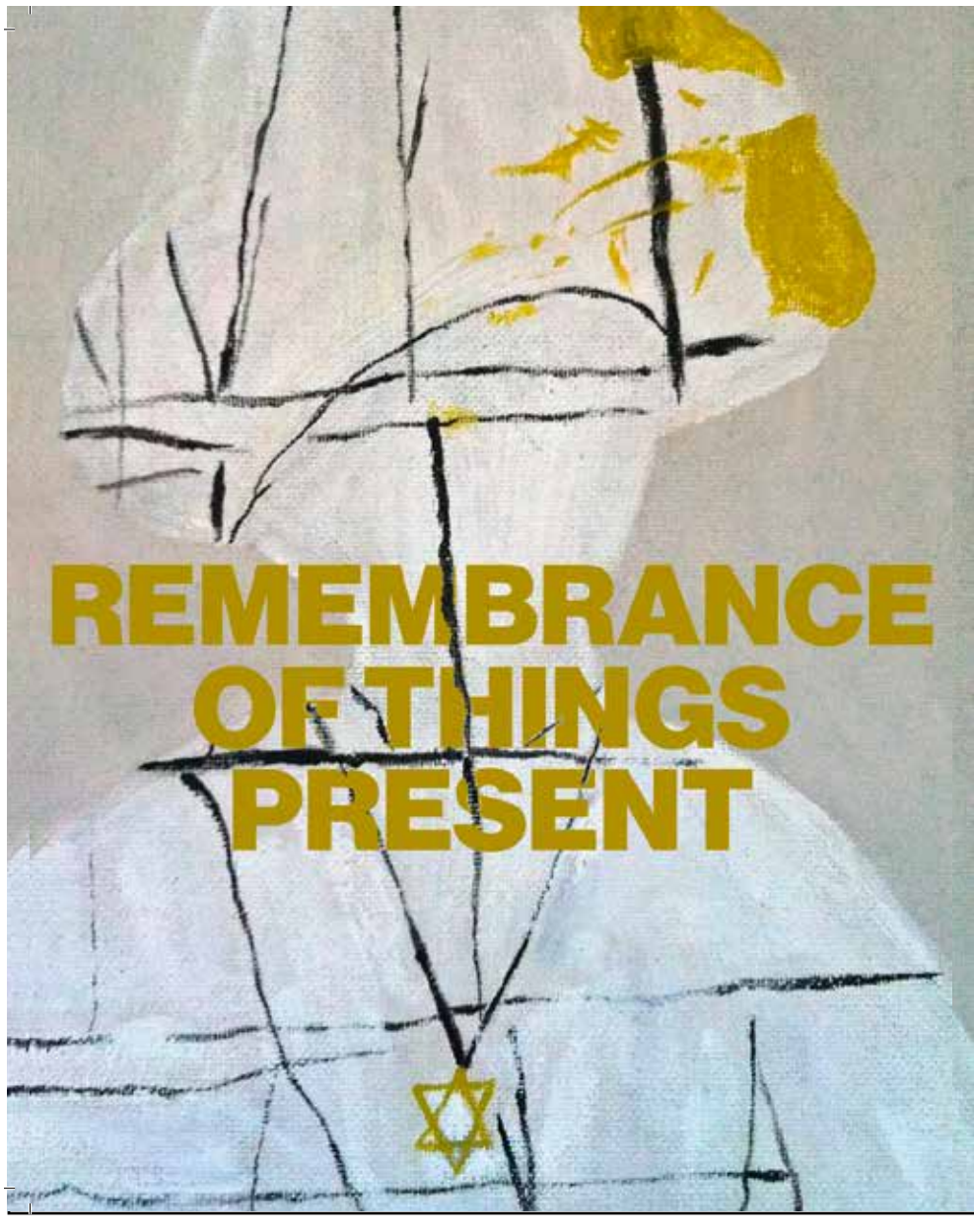
Sydney Sharkey

Joshua Dorfman

Each of these teens have extraordinary qualities that helped them stand out in the selection process: Joshua's love for the games and desire to make new friends and connections, Sydney's passion for incorporating Judaism into her everyday life, and Guy's high level of sportsmanship that actually won him two Midot (values) medals at the 2025 Games in Pittsburgh. These Ann Arbor teens will surely make a very positive impact as they work to shape the 2026 Games.

Team Ann Arbor-Nahalal is actively recruiting Ann Arbor Jewish teens to join for the 2026 JCC Maccabi Games and Access in Toronto, taking place from August 2–7, 2026. In addition to connecting teens from around the world through a week-long Olympic-style sports competition, JCC Maccabi also gives teens the opportunity to hang with Israeli Shlichim (young Israelis who serve as cultural ambassadors to Jewish communities), attend fun night-time social events, and participate in JCC Cares service projects. This program is a truly unforgettable experience and creates lifelong friendships.

If you have or know of a Jewish teen who would be interested in participating, please contact Drew Coel, Delegation Head, at drewcoel@jccannarbor.org. ■



IN-PERSON PROGRAM

Sunday, January 25
2:30 PM
Register at HolocaustCenter.org/January

The story of the Holocaust continues long after liberation. *Remembrance of Things Present* brings to life once-hidden stories of survivors' descendants.

Join us at The HC to experience true stories performed by professional actors: the son and grandson of a partisan leader grappling with his legacy, a daughter confronting her father's Shoah testimony, and the child of a French Resistance fighter inspired to activism. These powerful stories offer heroism, healing, and hope when they are needed most.

Admission: $10 per person, or free for members of The HC
Refreshments will be served.

THE Zekelman HOLOCAUST CENTER
28123 Orchard Lake Rd
Farmington Hills, MI 48334
248.553.2400
holocaustcenter.org

Making Jewish camp more affordable

By Kadi Swerdlow, Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor

At Jewish overnight camp, kids discover who they are — and who they want to become — while having the time of their lives. They try out new things and find the best versions of themselves. They play basketball, go sailing, practice art, and even explore special interests like science or entrepreneurship or culinary arts — and while they're doing it, they make lifelong friends and build important life skills. At the end of the day, they get to sing songs, toast marshmallows, and make memories. When it's all done in a Jewish context, young people deepen their Jewish identity, which they carry with them their entire lives.

Of course, every summer camp comes with a price tag, and often a steep one. Luckily, there are financial resources available for those families wishing to send their kids to Jewish summer camp. The Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor is pleased to once again partner with Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County (JFS) and the national Foundation for Jewish Camp's One Happy Camper (FJC) to address the financial burden of attending Jewish summer camp.

With the support of JFS, families can apply for scholarships to attend Jewish overnight or day camps, including Camp Gan Israel, Camp Tavor, and the JCC's Camp Raanana. Applications for these scholarships will be accepted January until early April and can be found on the Federation's website at jewishannarbor.org/engagement/camp/.

In summer 2025, the Jewish Federation offered scholarships for a meaningful Jewish camp experience to 45 children from across greater Ann Arbor. Since 2018, contributions to the Federation's Annual Community Campaign have helped send over 200 local children to Jewish camp, representing more than $90,000 in financial support.

In addition, for those campers looking to attend Jewish overnight camp for the first time, the Federation's partnership with the Foundation for Jewish Camp's One Happy Camper program offers first-time camper grants of up to $1,000. To be eligible for the grant, a child must be attending Jewish overnight camp for the first time, be attending camp for 12+ nights, and not be currently attending a full-time Jewish school (such as Hebrew Day School).

Through the Jewish Federation, the greater Ann Arbor community joined the One Happy Camper network in 2020. Across North America each summer, over 7,000 children are sponsored by One Happy Camper. While the grants are only available for a camper's first overnight experience, surveys indicate that 87% return for a second summer with more certainty about the financial investment in their child's camp experience — when their children return home, 97% of parents agree that Jewish camp makes their child proud to be Jewish.

For more information about camp scholarships or One Happy Camper grants, or to find a camp and learn about other resources, visit jewishannarbor.org/engagement/camp/ or contact the Federation's Engagement and Impact Manager, Kadi Swerdlow, at Kadi@jewishannarbor.org.

If you would like to make a donation that directly supports financial aid for families to access Jewish camps, contributions can be made to the Jewish Federation's 2026 Annual Community Campaign at jewishannarbor.org/donate, or by contacting the Federation's Campaign Manager Becky Melamed at Becky@JewishAnnArbor.org.

Ann Arbor area kids have greater access to the joy of Jewish summer camp thanks to financial support from scholarships and grants. ■

Now open: Winter 2026 Community Engagement Fund Grants

By Kadi Swerdlow, Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor

In the fall 2025 cycle of Community Engagement Fund Grants from the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor, themes of music and togetherness emerged loud and clear. The Federation is pleased to share more about those projects funded at the end of last year, and to announce that applications are now open for the winter 2026 grant cycle.

Community Engagement Fund grants are intended to encourage organizations and individuals to work collaboratively on innovative initiatives that cultivate a connected, caring, and vibrant Jewish community in Washtenaw County. The funding aims to incentivize programming and initiatives that bring the community together. Special consideration will be given to projects focused on teen engagement, and on Jewish arts and culture.

Letters of Intent for the upcoming grant cycle are due by January 15, and full applications are due by February 9. Grants of up to $5,000 per project are available. Proposals must be submitted for one-time programs by a formal or informal partnership of at least three collaborators. Guidelines for submission can be found at jewishannarbor.org/grants.

Members of the Israel Symphony Orchestra following their concert at Beth Israel Congregation.

Three projects funded in Fall 2025 have already taken place, and three more will come to life in the early part of 2026. Those events still to come are: a Klezmer series with Jake Shulman-Ment & Abigale Reisman, a community garden through Hebrew Day School, and a weekend-long series of programs with visionary voice Shahanna McKinney-Baldon on being a Jewish Person of Color in Trump Era 2.0.

Reflections: Commemorating 10/7 Featuring Maya Izoutcheev (Oct 16, 2025)

On the two-year anniversary of Hamas' horrific attacks on Israel, the Ann Arbor Jewish community hosted Nova Music Festival survivor Maya Izoutcheev, who shared an emotionally moving account of her experience that day and in the two years since. Just days after the final living hostages had been released from Gaza, the commemoration combined hope with lingering grief, thanks to the local community leaders and clergy who shared their own reflections, prayers, and music. This unifying and meaningful event was a collaboration between the JCC of Greater Ann Arbor, the Jewish Federation, Beth Israel Congregation, Temple Beth Emeth, and Chabad.

Israel Symphony Orchestra (Oct 22, 2025)

Members of the Israel Symphony Orchestra visited Ann Arbor for an inspiring evening of music and connection. Throughout the recent war in Israel, the Orchestra has continued to perform around Israel and worldwide. The evening featured classical and Jewish music by Schubert, Beethoven, and Gideon Klein, as well as traditional Israeli and Jewish songs. The concert was followed by a reception, including a meet and greet with the musicians. The program was put on by a collaboration between Beth Israel Congregation, Temple Beth Emeth, the JCC, and Hebrew Day School.

Yonina in Concert (Nov 16, 2025)

The Israeli musical duo Yonina brought an energetic concert to the Ann Arbor JCC in mid-November. The act performed to over 150 community members of a variety of ages, synagogue affiliations, schools, and other communities around greater Ann Arbor. The music was exciting, with kids often getting up to dance and sing along. In addition to their beautifully melodic music, Yoni and Nina told powerful stories about life in Israel and their love for the Jewish state. This evening of celebration in Jewish community was a partnership of the Hebrew Day School, the Jewish Federation's JCRC (Jewish Community Relations Committee), Beth Israel Congregation, and Temple Beth Emeth.

For more information about the Community Engagement Fund, visit jewishannarbor.org/grants or contact the Jewish Federation's Engagement and Impact Manager Kadi Swerdlow at kadi@jewishannarbor.org. ■

Mother-daughter art duo and Joseph Bergman's papercuts at JCC's Amster Gallery

By Drew Coel, Marketing and Program Associate, Ann Arbor JCC

The Amster Gallery is starting 2026 with two special exhibits. Artwork will be available for viewing starting January 14. The reception will take place on Thursday, February 5 from 6–7:30 p.m. Enjoy light refreshments while exploring the work of

two talented artists.

Esther and Shai-Lee are a mother-daughter art duo whose shared love for creativity spans generations. Their collaborative work, which will be featured in the Newman Lounge, celebrates imagination, emotion, and connection, capturing the beauty found in everyday life and the bonds that tie us together.

Esther's pieces reflect years of exploration in prints, acrylics, watercolors, and mixed media, while Shai-Lee brings a fresh, fearless perspective to each project. Together, they merge experience and curiosity to create vibrant works that speak to growth, love, and the power of creating side by side.

This exhibit, *It's Just Life,* is a reflection of their journey — a visual conversation between two artists learning from and inspiring each other, as well as their individuality brought from Israel and life in Michigan.

Also featured for the February 5 reception are the drawings and papercuts of Ann Arbor artist Joseph Bergman, whose work will be up in the Amster Gallery. Born in New York City and raised in the Bronx, Joseph was raised by Jewish parents who were new immigrants from Poland and kept a Yiddish-speaking household. He received a

Joseph Bergman

Folkshul Jewish education in his formative years, studying Jewish culture and history. Joseph also lived on a kibbutz for 18 months while visiting his brother, which is also where he met his wife, Barbara.

Joseph also had a richly artistic post-secondary education, receiving a BFA in Art Education from the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn and an MFA in Art from Penn State. Joseph's love of art turned into 35 years of teaching art and design at Siena Heights University in Adrian, Michigan. During his time at Siena Heights, he notably started and developed the digital imaging and graphic design program, featuring 2D and 3D design, drawing, printmaking, and more.

"The drawings and papercuts in this show are done in a free, unplanned, spontaneous method without any external references or sources," Joseph states. "They are not planned, have no messages, subjects, or external meanings attached to them. Identifiable images in these works are purely subconscious and coincidental. But like improvisational music and other spontaneous art forms, one needs to master the tools, formal understanding of colors, shapes, and working methods."

The work of both Esther and Shai-Lee and Joseph will be for sale here at the JCC. We hope to see you at the reception on Thursday, February 5!. ■

Jewish Book Series January event: Six Days in Bombay by Alka Joshi

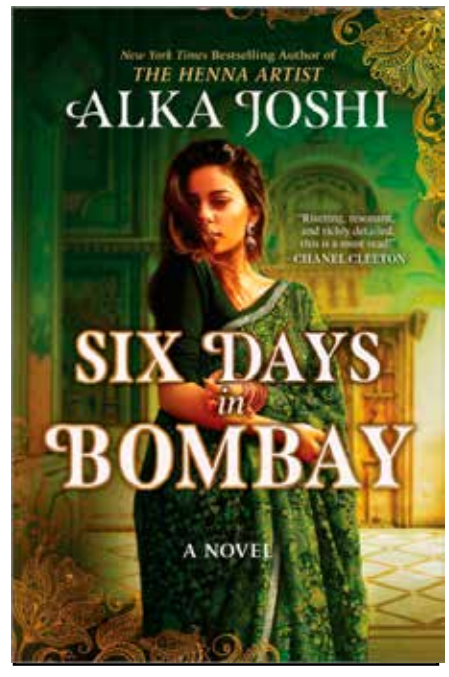
By Eva Kubacki, Cultural Arts Coordinator, Ann Arbor JCC

The Jewish Book Series will continue into 2026 with guest speaker and author, Alka Joshi, author of the historical novel *Six Days in Bombay*. The event will take place on Thursday, January 29, from 5:30–7:30 p.m. Registration for this event can be found on Jlive.app.

Joshi began her career as an author with the release of her first novel, The Henna Artist, in 2020. The book immediately became a New York Times bestseller and went on to become the first story in Joshi's Jaipur Trilogy.

Six Days in Bombay is Joshi's fourth novel and follows the story of Sona, a nurse working in 1930s Bombay (Mumbai). She is caring for the renowned Jewish painter, Mira Novak, following a miscarriage. After Mira dies suddenly and mysteriously, suspicion is cast onto Sona, who must fight to prove her innocence using only four paintings and a cryptic note.

The character of Mira is based on a real life Hungarian Jewish-Indian painter named Amrita Sher-Gil. Mira's Jewish identity is highlighted in the story and the novel explores the complexity, reality, and beauty of intersectional identities.



With questions about this year's book series, please contact the JCC at (734) 971-0990. ■

Marty Fischhoff honored for 'The Black Church in Detroit' initiative

Marty Fischhoff

Detroit PBS Director of Community Engagement, and Ann Arbor resident, Marty Fischhoff, is the recipient of a distinguished service award from the Ecumenical Theological Seminary (ETS) in recognition of his work establishing and managing American Black Journal's "The Black Church in Detroit" initiative.

Fischhoff was honored at the annual ETS Gala at The Henry Hotel in Dearborn on November 14. The evening's theme was "Celebrating Leaders Who Empower Through Faith and Service." A brief video presentation celebrating Fischhoff's professional achievements and contributions was shown prior to him receiving the award.

"The Black Church in Detroit" project began in 2021, and Ecumenical Theological Seminary is a partner in the initiative, along with the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History. Fischhoff was instrumental in establishing an advisory committee consisting of religious leaders in Detroit and the surrounding area. Each month, the committee meets virtually to discuss topics of concern to the Black church. American Black Journal dedicates one episode each month to conversations surrounding these issues.

Dr. Deborah Smith Pollard, a gospel radio host on WMXD-FM and University of Michigan -Dearborn professor emerita, also received a distinguished service award from ETS. She has been a guest on ABJ discussing the evolution and influence of gospel music. . ■

Temple Beth Emeth

AMERICAN JEWISH UNIVERSITY
Jewish Learning Experience

TEMPLE BETH EMETH IN COLLABORATION WITH AMERICAN JEWISH UNIVERSITY

HELP BUILD YOUR RESUME WITH A COLLEGE CREDIT CLASS

THE 2026-2027 SCHOOL YEAR
DETAILS WILL BE FINALIZED IN THE SPRING

In collaboration with AJU, Temple Beth Emeth is offering a transferable college level Jewish studies course for all 10-12 graders in the Fall of 2026.

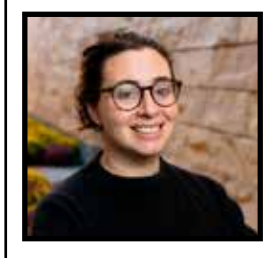
Open to all students - you do not need to belong to TBE to participate.

Registration will open in Spring 2026. Scan the QR code to fill out the interest form to be on the list for registration information.

M | LSA JEAN & SAMUEL FRANKEL CENTER FOR JUDAIC STUDIES UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

UPCOMING EVENTS

Visit **lsa.umich.edu/judaic** for more information



Scholars in Session: "Advice Columns and the American Press"
Speaker: Ayelet Brinn (Frankel Institute Fellow)
Sunday, January 18 | 4:30 - 6:00 PM
The J - Detroit *(6600 W Maple Rd West Bloomfield, MI, 48322)*

Hebrew and the Machine: When Ancient Language Meets Modern Technology
Panelists: Ido Ramati (Hebrew University of Jerusalem) and Cara Rock-Singer (U-M)
Tuesday, February 10 | 5:00 - 6:30 PM
Room 2022, South Thayer Building

SAVE THE DATE

36th Annual David W. Belin Lecture: "Orthodox Jewish Wellness Influencers in the Age of Viral Politics"
Speaker: Ayala Fader (Fordham University)
Thursday, March 26 | 5:30 - 7:30 PM
Michigan Union, Pendleton Room

We are pleased to provide reasonable accommodations to enable full participation in this event. Please contact js-event-coord@umich.edu to request disability accommodations or with any questions/concerns.

Kosher Cuisine

January, the secular new year

By Lonnie Sussman

It's always a thrill and a little shocking, to see the secular new year arrive. 2026! The Jewish calendar celebrated the new Jewish year months ago, back in September 2025, as 5786.

Creamy Quinoa Artichoke Casserole

The Vegan Week by Gena Hamshaw

6 servings.

Yummy, creamy, filling, easy, and healthy. What's to not like? Swap out the vegetables for your favorites and choose your favorite beans.

- 1¼ cups white quinoa
- 2½ cups water
- 1¼ cups milk or unsweetened non-dairy milk
- 1 cup cooked or canned (drain and rinse) beans (cannellini, great northern, or navy)
- ¼ cup raw cashews or pine nuts, soaked in water for at least 2 hours, then drained
- ¼ cup nutritional yeast
- 3 tbs lemon juice (freshly squeezed)
- 1 tbs white miso
- Kosher salt to taste
- ¼ tsp garlic powder
- 2 tsp olive oil
- 2 large shallots, chopped
- 1½ cups quartered artichoke hearts or one 14-oz can
- 1½ cups thawed frozen green peas
- 1 tbs grated lemon zest
- Ground pepper to taste
- ¼ cup dried breadcrumbs

Preheat oven to 350 degrees and oil a 9 by 13 baking dish. Cook the quinoa by first rinsing it under cold running water for about 30 seconds. Add the rinsed quinoa and the water to a medium pot and bring to a boil, then turn the heat to low and cook, covered until all the water is absorbed, about 13 minutes. Remove from heat and allow to sit for 5 minutes. Uncover the pot and fluff the quinoa with a fork. Then cover it again while you make the rest of the recipe. Use a blender or food processor and add the milk, beans, cashews, nutritional yeast, lemon juice, miso, 1 tsp salt, and the garlic powder, and process until smooth. Heat the olive oil in a large, deep skillet over medium heat and add the shallot. Cook, stirring frequently, until tender and translucent, about 2–3 minutes. Add the artichoke hearts, peas, cooked quinoa, and lemon zest to the skillet and pour in the milk and stir to mix. Taste for salt and pepper as needed. Heat the mixture for another 2–3 minutes until warm. Pour into the baking dish and sprinkle with the breadcrumbs. Bake until the top is just turning golden, about 30–35 minutes.

Squash and Bean Stew

River Cottage Veg by Hugh Fearnley-Whittings

Serves 6

There are at least 7 *River Cottage* cookbooks, including one for meat and one for fish.

- 2 tbs canola or olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 tsp sweet paprika or smoked paprika
- Chopped oregano or marjoram (small handful or to taste)
- 1 can beans, drained and rinsed (cannellini, pinto, or navy)
- 1 quart vegetable broth
- 1 bay leaf
- 1½ pounds squash (butternut or red Kuri), peeled, seeded and cut into ¾ inch chunks
- 7 oz green beans, cut into ¾ inch pieces
- 1 can corn or 1 package frozen corn
- Salt and pepper to taste

Heat the oil in a large saucepan or casserole over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and sauté gently for about 10 minutes, until softened. Add the paprika and 1 tbs oregano. Add the beans, squash, stock, and bay leaf, and simmer until the squash is tender. Then add the green beans and the corn and simmer another 5 minutes. To finish, add the salt and pepper to taste and more oregano if you want.

Pad Krapow

Serves 2

I found the vegetarian Thai dish on websites all over the internet. I'm going to Thailand in February. My favorite things about travel are history, nature, culture, and people, but not the food. Since I keep vegetarian/pescatarian, I don't eat the meats and seafood and just stick to the vegetarian dishes. I know that Thailand has a lot of options with rice and noodles and I'll be careful to check the spice levels and sauces, and all will be okay. I'm practicing by starting with some of these easy Thai recipes.

- 1 package extra firm tofu: squeeze out extra water and crumble the tofu into smaller pieces
- 1 cup basil. Traditionally made with Thai basil but you can use any fresh basil and add a little fresh mint
- Vegetables of your choice, sliced into smaller pieces. Use red peppers, chopped onion, ¾ cup green beans, chopped, or broccoli, carrots, mushrooms
- 4 cloves garlic, chopped
- ½ onion, chopped
- Oil to sauté, and salt and pepper to taste

Sauté the vegetables in oil and add the basil, 3 tbs dark soy sauce, 2½ tsp brown sugar, ¼ tsp ginger, and some chili flakes. Look for vegan oyster sauce to add to the dish if you like. Serve over rice, preferably Jasmine rice.

Cozy Red Curry Sweet Potato Stew

The Vegan Week by Gena Hamshaw

Serves 4–6

This isn't a Thai recipe, even though the recipe calls for a stalk of lemongrass, but I have a lot of sweet potatoes and squashes from the Tantre Farm Thanksgiving box, and this looks like a great way to use some of them.

- 1 tbs oil (avocado, canola, olive)
- 1 yellow onion, thinly sliced
- 1 red bell pepper, thinly sliced
- 2–3 tbs red curry paste
- 1 tbs peeled grated fresh ginger
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 13½-oz can full-fat coconut milk
- 1 cup water
- 1 to 2 tbs (to taste) tamari
- 1 tbs maple syrup
- 2 medium sweet potatoes, scrubbed and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 stalk lemongrass, lightly crushed with the side of a knife
- 3 cups seasonal fresh veggies or thawed frozen, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 2 tbs freshly squeezed lime juice
- Grain of your choice, rice, quinoa, or millet for serving

Heat the oil in a large deep skillet and add the onion and bell pepper until they soften, about 5–7 minutes. Add the curry paste, ginger, and garlic, and stir and cook until you smell the garlic. Add the coconut milk, water, tamari, and maple syrup, then add in the sweet potatoes and lemongrass. Stir and bring to a simmer, then turn the heat down to low. Cover and cook until the sweet potatoes are tender, about 10 minutes. Add the rest of the veggies and lime juice and cook uncovered until the vegetables are tender, maybe another 10 minutes. Remove the lemongrass, taste and adjust the lime and tamari to your taste. Serve over the rice or other grains. Can store in the refrigerator for up to 5 days or freeze for up to 6 weeks.

Asian-Inspired Coleslaw

River Cottage Veg by Hugh Fearnly-Whittings, but based on a recipe from *Taste*, by Sybil Kapoor

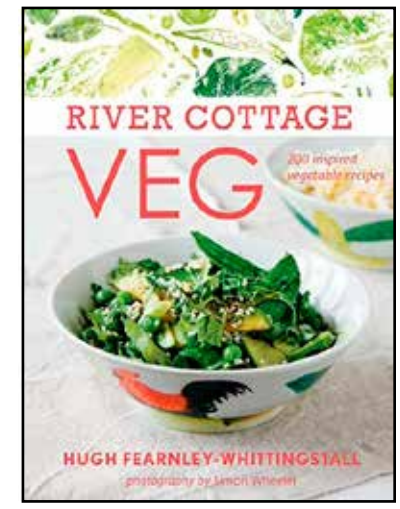
Serves 6–8

- A bunch of green onions, trimmed and sliced (about 6–8)
- 4 carrots, peeled and finely cut or coarsely grated
- 1 small green cabbage, cored and shredded

Dressing

- 2 tbs white wine vinegar or rice vinegar
- 2 tbs toasted sesame oil
- 2 tbs olive oil
- 2 tbs honey
- 1 tbs finely chopped ginger
- 1 garlic clove, finely chopped

Whisk together all these ingredients and pour over the vegetables and toss. Leave for 10–20 minutes to allow to blend all the flavors. You can top the slaw with cilantro (or not) and sprinkle with lime juice.



Restaurant review

Fresh Italian with bocce above

By Candace Bulkley and Trina Fuller

Candace and Trina became friends in the Temple Beth Emeth adult b-mitzvah class that graduated in 2022. They will be honing their palates, visiting, and writing about a variety of independent, locally owned Washtenaw County restaurants, catering to a variety of dietary preferences

Many longtime Ann Arborites were sad to see the closing of the Original Cottage Inn in early 2024. It was truly an institution and a reliable place for Italian food and a family dinner. In July 2025, Coratti's opened in the same location. The space has been transformed into a modern and comfortable spot for meals with family and friends.

A locally owned business, Coratti's has three locations in Michigan — the others are in Howell and East Lansing. Situated right at the edge of campus, their Ann Arbor location is catering both to the student crowd and to more sophisticated Townies and visitors. Walking up to the restaurant, you might notice the fresh pasta hanging to dry in the window — that will be Pietro's Market, which is incorporated into the main restaurant. Head one door to the east and you will find the main entrance to Coratti's.

The bar and dining room were hopping on the night of our visit. We were quickly seated at a comfortable and generously sized high-top table in the bar area close to the pizza ovens. There are two impressive and beautifully designed wood burning pizza ovens just beyond the bar and it was fun to watch the pizza preparation in process while we waited.

We knew that pizza was definitely going to be included in our order, and we had a bit of a debate over which one to choose. There are three varieties — Napoletana, traditional American, and Detroit style — and a myriad of toppings available. After our negotiations, we settled on the Napoletana burrata (fresh Italian mozzarella cheese ball). The pizza arrived with red sauce and a ball of burrata in the middle. The server instructed us that we should break open the burrata and spread it around. This process was a bit awkward because the burrata wasn't hot and it led to the pizza not staying hot and the crust getting a bit soggy in the center. With that said, the crust and tomato sauce were fresh tasting and delicious. Even the soggy slice *tasted* good but fell victim to the burrata's nature. After watching pizza after pizza go into the ovens and out to the tables, we will definitely be back to try the Napoletana with different toppings, and the other styles as well.

For a change of pace from a lettuce-based salad, we ordered the unusual sounding Shelly's Green Bean salad. Consisting of crisp fresh green beans, tomatoes, cucumbers, red onion, fresh mozzarella, and balsamic glaze tossed with house vinaigrette and ranch, it had a lot going on in one bowl. It was a good alternative to standard leafy greens. We decided we would really enjoy it in the heat of the summer during the height of tomato and green bean season.

We enjoyed almost everything we tried from the Shareables section of the menu. By far, the highlight of our meal was the suppli — reminiscent of arancini, they were delicious balls of arborio rice and cheese, fried to golden crisp perfection and served alongside a lovely house tomato sauce. We wanted to love the eggplant rollatini, but its breading-heavy preparation left us searching for the eggplant. We also tried the beef meatballs, which were full of flavor and accompanied by the same delicious red sauce as the eggplant and suppli.

If all of this wasn't enough, to satisfy our mushroom craving we tried the baked Funghi Sandwich. It was filled with mushrooms, roasted red peppers, broccoli rabe, Grana Padano cheese and vinaigrette dressing. The flavor combination was spot-on with the earthy mushrooms, sweet bell peppers, and the contrasting bitter vegetables all working in harmony. The vinaigrette on the sandwich made it soggy, unfortunately. Ask for the dressing on the side and you will have one delightful sandwich.

While dining, we noticed the "thunks" coming from above and determined that we were seated below the bocce court. After we had finished eating, we went upstairs to check it out. Two courts were occupied by a group of young men who appeared to be having a great time playing bocce and enjoying some items we recognized from the Shareables menu. There is also a party space upstairs. We could imagine it being the perfect spot for a rehearsal dinner. Bocce court time is reserved at the hostess stand, and it looked like a fun way to spend an evening with friends.

On our way out, we stopped in the adjoining Pietro's Market which features fresh pasta and sauces for a meal at home, the makings for an antipasto tray, house-made desserts, and freshly baked pocket pizzas, which are available for carry out only. The market also has an impressive selection of beer, wine, and olive oils. It is worth the stop in while you wait for a table or after your meal. Our group sampled the gelato, a cannoli, and the tiramisu. The gelato was freshly made in the shop and it was just right — creamy, full flavored, and not too heavy. The cannoli was filled after ordering, which meant that the shell was crisp. The tiramisu was a disappointment, as the essential mascarpone cheese element was missing or blended and lost with too much whipped cream, and it was topped with cinnamon rather than the expected cocoa. A week after our original dining experience, curiosity got the best of us and we placed a carry-out order. We tried two of the breads from Pietro's and an American style pizza. A pound of fresh pappardelle also made its way into our cart and provided the basis for a delicious Sunday night dinner. The American style pizza was a winner and the breads were fantastic — with the same chewy crust as the Napoletana pizza, plenty of cheese, and a generous portion of toppings.

Carotti's is finding its own way in a legendary location. Cottage Inn's owners are enjoying retirement while their spirit lives on in a fresh take on Italian food and pizza. We had some misses, but overall had an enjoyable meal and will definitely be back. ■

Coratti's Pizza, Bar & Bocce

512 E. William St., Ann Arbor

734.275.2050

https://www.corattispizzeria.com/ann-arbor

Feature

48 hours in Damascus, Part 2 of 4

By David Horovitz, introduced by Rabbi Asher Lopatin

Like many of us, I had followed closely the news of the rapid fall of the brutal Assad regime in Syria in December 2024, defeating Assad's troops and his allies Hezbollah and Iran. Nevertheless, I was surprised to receive a call in February of 2025 from a Muslim Syrian friend and partner in Muslim Jewish relations in Michigan urging me to join a small group of Jews returning to Syria. With the approval of my dear wife, I joined two Syrian rabbis (father and son), and coaxed a friend, also involved in interfaith relations, to come along. What followed was an incredible experience that led to organizing my own trip to Syria in September through the Syrian Foreign Ministry, bringing 10 Jewish leaders, some of them from Israel, to Syria on a Goodwill Mission. The article you will read was written by one of them, David Horovitz, Editor and Founder of the Times of Israel.

As you read part 2 of our Goodwill Mission to Syria, you may be thinking "What is the purpose of this mission?" My own involvement in organizing this mission — and hopefully subsequent missions — is to deepen relations between Syria's government, institutions, and people, and the United States, the democratic world, and Syria's neighbors in the Middle East … Israel! Yes, I may be reaching, or too aspirational, but I hope that one day Syria and Israel will become best friends. I have expressed all that to the Syrian foreign ministry, so it is not a secret. By deepening these relations, we hope that Syria grows more and more respectful of religious and ethnic minorities. Hopefully, the lure of better relations, and the economic and security benefits that come from them, will put some pressure on Syria to discipline any elements within the government or armed forces that do not share the values of tolerance and respect for the Druze, Alawite, Kurdish, and Christian populations. Time will tell how effective these missions are in achieving their goals, but I remain hopeful. A strong, tolerant Syria, at peace with her neighbors and resisting the forces of intolerance and hate in the Middle East, would be an incredible gift for our world.

The souk in Damascus, September 15, 2025. (Mendy Chitrik)

The cemetery

Our next stop is at Damascus' Jewish cemetery — graves going back hundreds of years, and some just added.

Syria's Jewish community dates back to the time of King David but is now on the very brink of extinction — from perhaps 100,000 people a century ago, to 15,000 by the late 1940s, to almost none since the 1990s. There seem to be six Jews still living in Syria — four men and two women — two of whom we meet in the next few days. Several others had died in recent years; Chitrik points out some of their graves. He led a funeral ceremony over Zoom for one of them from his home in Turkey during the COVID era.

Pride of place at the cemetery is taken by the tomb of Rabbi Hayyim Vital, leading disciple of the father of contemporary Kabbalah, Isaac Luria, who was buried here in 1620. On his previous visit, Lopatin came across the gravestone of Vital's wife Jamila, and he's got the idea that we can maybe carry it the several hundred yards from its current resting place and into the tomb of her husband. As Lopatin disappears into the distance to re-find Jamila's headstone, a local woman, a member of the family that lives inside the cemetery walls next to the building of the hevra kadisha (Jewish burial society), appears and offers us much-needed water.

When we follow Lopatin out to Jamila Vital's headstone, it's pretty evident that nobody's going to be lifting it — and certainly not our not-entirely-youthful crew. The rabbi instead recites the "El Malei Rahamim" prayer for her soul.

Behind him as he intones the prayer is a large mound of gravestones, apparently removed when the adjacent main road was built and piled up here at random. At least the highway builders of the Assad era chose not to pave over the entire cemetery.

We then return to Hayyim Vital's tomb and gather, along with a few of Jajati's visiting friends who have appeared, for the first minyan over the late kabbalist's grave in what is surely many a year.

Members of the government's security team, the protocol department, and the drivers watch some of this unfolding. We get quite friendly with them over the coming two days, as far as our general lack of a common language allows.

The stolen doors

Without warning, we now find ourselves being driven a considerable distance around what appears to be much of Damascus, the convoy cutting in and out of heavy traffic in an endless cacophony of horns.

Among the sights, we pass the Defense Ministry building in the city center — bombed by the Israeli Air Force just two months ago, as Israel pressed the Syrian government to withdraw its forces from the Druze heartland of Sweida in the south — with the damage plain to see.

We pull up at what turns out to be a police station. Here, in an upstairs room, leaning up against the wall of the captain's office, are two bronze doors of a synagogue — which were stolen last week, reported stolen immediately by Jajati, and recovered the same day by the captain and his men.

It is becoming quite evident, and we will hear a lot more about this in our meetings with officials tomorrow, that the new Syrian leadership is inter-

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CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES
EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

MONDAY, JANUARY 26, 2026
7:00 PM, STUDENT CENTER, ROOM 352

MIKE ROTHSCHILD:

"JEWISH SPACE LASERS: THE ROTHSCHILDS AND 200 YEARS OF CONSPIRACY THEORIES"

Mike Rothschild is a journalist, expert in the growth and impact of conspiracy theories and disinformation, and author. He has been featured by The New York Times, The Washington Post, the New Yorker, the BBC, NPR, Rolling Stone, the Guardian, and more, appearing on CNN, MSNBC, and PBS Newshour, and other major podcasts and radio shows.

48 hours in Damascus continues from page 14

ested in cultivating good relations with the Jews of Syria who now live abroad, notably in Brooklyn — encouraging them to consider returning, to be part of the country's intended revival, to serve as an emblem of a new, tolerant Syrian era, to symbolize a Syria that should be invested in and supported.

Thus, in this clearly well-organized stop on our trip, a Syrian TV crew is on hand to film the visiting Jewish group's pleasure at the rapid recovery of the purloined portals, and to interview Lopatin, who praises the police's exceptional efficiency.

Jajati tells me the doors were stolen from the Menarsha synagogue, and that there is no way they can be securely returned there, and so they will stay at the police station for the time being.

'And this is the Torah'

We now take a 10-minute walk through the streets of Damascus, past bakeries and fruit stalls and garages, with a handful of security people and armed soldiers nearby. Led by Lopatin, carrying his tefillin bag, we are a little group of Jews walking through what used to be a fairly Jewish neighborhood and attracting a mixture of mildly curious and smiling glances — taking a literal few first steps, perhaps, to renormalizing Jewishness in an area where it has all but disappeared.

Our destination is the Elfaranje Synagogue, built by immigrants fleeing the Spanish Inquisition. Entering is not straightforward. The shul was in routine use when there was a community here, but there has been no minyan for at least a decade and there appears to have been some confusion about who holds the keys to the multiple locks and chains that secure it.

After a lot of trial and error, all the right keys are found and we enter the building, accompanied by one of those last six Damascene Jews, Bachar Simantov, a charismatic silver-haired figure of sparkling teeth and unknowable age who assures me that he is 35 years old and that, although his family is in Israel and the U.S., he will stay in Syria for the rest of his days.

For all of us visitors, I think, this is one of the most moving parts of our stay — reviving prayer, davening with a minyan, in a very old synagogue that is nonetheless completely intact; it feels like the former Jewish worshipers have just left the building.

Chitrik leads the service. Lopatin opens the ark and takes out a Sefer Torah for the brief Monday reading, and we sing "VeZot HaTorah" — and this is the Torah. Jajati performs Hagba, displaying the scroll. People are called to the bima. The scroll is returned. All watched by the protocol and security personnel.

The decorations on the innermost set of doors include two tablets bearing the first words of the Ten Commandments. Blessed by the presence as translator of one of Jajati's colleagues, a much-traveled young Muslim man who speaks native Arabic and English, we establish that Islam sets out similar principles. I talk one of the protocol officers through the commandments as inscribed on the doors, and he nods in recognition.

A cash brick

It's late afternoon now, and we're all pretty exhausted.

We are driven to our hotel, in Damascus' Old City — a building formerly owned by Jajati's father, Faraj, the home where Joseph grew up. You can still see the faint marks where the mezuzah used to be affixed to the doorpost.

Chitrik is supervising a kosher dinner, having brought in frozen meat in his suitcase and prepared the kitchen as required. He's also sourced local hummus untainted by any ingredients or implements that would render it non-kosher.

Israelis used to speak about the day when we'd be "eating hummus in Damascus" as being emblematic of a longed-for era of peace. Now, we're eating hummus in Damascus, and it's even kosher, says Chitrik.

While the food is cooked, a few of us, in twos and threes, go for a walk to the main souk, just around the corner. A security guard accompanies some of our number, but others go out unescorted. The day's official itinerary is evidently completed now, and our security is apparently not thought to be at risk.

I stroll on my own through some of the streets and alleys — not looking particularly unusual, and thus attracting zero attention. I peer into an antiques store where I'd seen Jajati and two others of our group chatting happily a little earlier, and owner Mohammad insists on walking me to an adjacent change place. Absurdly, it will turn out, I decide to change $100, and am rewarded with three bricks of notes in 5,000 and 2,000 denominations.

The 2,000-pound notes still bear the face of Bashar al-Assad, reputedly hiding out in Moscow but still ever-present in the shattered Syria he left behind. (In contrast to the Assad dynasty, I see no cult of Sharaa in our brief visit, no massive posters with his features hanging from buildings.)

Back in the change place, they hand over my 1.34 million Syrian pounds. The bricks of cash are far too large to stuff into my various pants pockets. They offer me a plastic bag.

Mohammad says the pound has lost almost two-thirds of its value since the civil war began in 2011. "So, things have gradually become worse economically?" I ask him. "Yes, but the country is better now," he replies.

Later, I run into Lopatin, kippa on head as ever, in the souk. He is looking for some "I love Syria" hats for his family. No luck. They have plenty with the republic's eagle symbol, but those look a little, well, military.

We buy ice cream instead. I peel off three 2,000-pound notes from my vast pile. ■

Rabbi Aharon Goldstein

Moses and Aaron plea to Pharaoh

By Rabbi Aharon Goldstein, Chabad of Ann Arbor

At the end of the Torah portion we will read on Saturday, January 10, Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh to demand that he free the Children of Israel from bondage. Pharaoh answered them, "Why do you, Moses and Aaron, hinder the people from their work? Go about your own tasks."

Our Sages explain that Moses and Aaron, being members of the tribe of Levi, were not required to work like the rest of the Jewish People and were exempted from the bitter decree of slavery. Pharaoh, in effect, asked the two of them: "Why do you involve yourselves in affairs that don't concern you? Let the rest of the Jews continue in their tasks, and don't disturb them."

Why did the Egyptians permit an entire tribe of the Jewish People to be exempt from the terrible bondage forced upon the rest? The Egyptians recognized that each nation must have its own leaders and teachers to whom the people could turn for spiritual guidance. Pharaoh therefore allowed the tribe of Levi to continue learning Torah and to disseminate its teachings among the rest of the Jews. It was accepted as a natural state of affairs that the spiritual authorities should enjoy a higher status and occupy an elevated position in society.

When Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh to demand that the entire Jewish nation be allowed to journey into the desert to worship G-d, they were disputing this commonly held notion. Pharaoh, for his part, claimed that it was sufficient that the upper class, the clergy, be allowed to learn Torah and carry out Jewish ritual. Pharaoh was the original proponent of the separation of "church" and state. The Egyptian king did not object to the Leviim learning Torah; he did not seek to totally negate the spiritual and intellectual yearnings of the Jews. He merely sought to perpetuate the Egyptian worldview which saw the two realms of the religious and the civil as two opposing concepts.

As religious leaders, Moses and Aaron were allowed a certain amount of authority by the Egyptian regime, on the condition that they limit themselves to the synagogue and to the yeshiva.

When Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh with their request, it was seen as a total contradiction of the existing world order. They claimed that the Torah's very purpose was to show man how to conduct his daily, private life, and that its laws were applicable to each and every facet of a person's existence. Moses and Aaron radically challenged the man-made division between that which belonged in the spiritual realm and that which was outside of religious law. The Torah is neither limited in scope nor reserved for a select few.

From this we also learn the duty incumbent upon every Jew to help other Jews, even if he is not personally threatened. Aaron and Moses were not content to remain within the secluded tents of learning if the rest of the Jews were not allowed to participate. Because of their self-sacrifice on behalf of the Jewish nation, they were ultimately successful in ending the Egyptian exile and leading the Jews to Mount Sinai.. ■

Walking Toward Shabbat with Adamah Detroit
January 30, 2026 @ 10:00 am – 11:00 am EDT
Woodland Hills Nature Park

26655 Farmington Rd Farmington Hills, 48334

A Joyful January Jaunt through the Woods!
Join Adamah Detroit ahead of Tu B'Shvat for an enriching guided nature walk through Woodland Hills Nature Park. We'll see friends old and new and feel the calming and restorative impacts of time outside together. The walk will include opening and closing circles and a Jewish environmental teaching from Rabbi Nosanwisch of Adat Shalom Synagogue.

One Light for Justice celebrated Hanukkah, Diwali, and Sigd

By Drew Coel, Marketing and Program Associate, Ann Arbor JCC

On December 4, 2025, the Jewish and Hindu communities came together once again for a fun-filled multifaith celebration at the JCC. In addition to celebrating Hanukkah and Diwali, this year's event included the celebration of Sigd, a significant Ethiopian Jewish holiday. Sigd is a day of fasting and reflection for the Beta Israel community to celebrate the renewal and covenant with God, and their connection to the Torah. Building on the foundation of last year's partnership, we continue to share food, customs, traditions, the spirit of giving between communities, and to honor the memory of Samantha Woll (z"l), a pillar of the Southeast Michigan Jewish community.

Attendees filed in before the start of the event, bringing with them new toys and non-perishable goods for UM's Mott Children's Hospital and Food Gatherers, respectively. Lines for food formed very quickly, and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the Indian food from Chennai Express, consisting of chana masala, aloo gobi, fried rice, naan, and a delectable, melt-in-your-mouth dessert called mysore pak, made with butter, sugar and chickpea flour. Everyone also indulged in kosher pizza from Jerusalem Pizza, latkes with applesauce and sour cream, and delicious donuts.

Children and families engaged in the activities offered throughout the building. The biggest attraction, by far, was the henna design table run by Rifat Rodoshi. Henna, a dye made from dried, powdered leaves, is made into a paste and then used to create temporary body art. Kids gathered around the table to watch her intricate work, showing off their own designs with a big smile once Rifat had finished. In addition, everyone participated in arts and crafts projects, including diya and dreidel painting. In the gym, attendees learned interactive Jewish and Indian dancing, including Garba and Israeli folk dancing. "The dancing has always been my favorite part of this event," says Rabbi Asher Lopatin, Director of Community Relations for the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor. "I love watching everyone from both communities learn the dances of the other."

At the end of the evening, everyone gathered in the gym together to watch the leaders of both communities light the candles for Hanukkah and the diyas for Diwali. During this ceremony, community members, kids and adults alike who celebrated each of the three holidays spoke about what their respective holidays meant to them. Observing this tradition for the second year in a row made it more special and meaningful. Afterwards, Harita Vadari, HCRC Executive Board Member and one of the main organizers of the event, performed an adapted form of Indian classical dance with storytelling in English.

"Congratulations to everyone involved for another successful multifaith event!" states Harita. "As part of HCRC, it has been an honor seeing this event grow since last year. There is power in an event like this, where you can see members of two different communities enjoy delicious food, dancing, and have a cultural exchange of knowledge. It allows us to see that we are more similar than different. We look forward to many more such events in the future, and including many more members of the community to enjoy it alongside us!"

Thank you very much to the co-sponsors of this event: The family of Samantha Woll (z"l), Hindu Community Relations Council of Michigan, MI India, the JCRC of the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor, Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor, and the Jewish People of Color Network of Greater Ann Arbor. . ■

A2J Climate Circle

A2JCC shares food and prayer

By Rena Basch, Michael Simon, and Annie Wolock for Ann Arbor Jewish Climate Circle

The Ann Arbor Jewish Climate Circle (A2J CC) is a coalition of Washtenaw County Jewish organizations with its "home" under the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) umbrella. The goal of the A2JCC is to educate, motivate, and coalesce our community around the Jewish value of tikun olam to push back against the onslaught of climate change.

To honor our commitment to bringing our community together, we have initiated quarterly Friday night Shabbat dinners. Our most recent vegetarian potluck was at Beth Israel Congregation (BIC) on November 7, before Friday night services. Approximately 40 of us gathered for a delicious vegetarian smorgasbord. Michael Simon (Vice President, Tikun Olam at BIC and A2J CC member) and Rachel Jacobson (lead researcher on State Climate Policy and board member of Adamah) kicked off the conversation with updates on climate action work in Detroit, and then the conversation flowed. The potluck was a warm and welcoming event where we connected and discussed positive climate actions, ideas, and concerns for the future.

BIC composts all food waste through a well-tuned, well-organized system. It was impressive how, when an organization is motivated, it can reduce a tremendous amount of waste through simple, replicable steps. During dinner and service, we basked in the glow of LED lighting installed throughout the buildings.

From our potluck, we went over to services. Rav Nadav led a beautiful eco-Shabbat service, in which liturgy was expertly woven around music led by Rachel Laurence Lupton, a music therapist and music specialist at BIC, and an eco-theme, with climate-related readings and poems, many written by local authors, including Rabbi Sara Adler, Daryl Hafter, and a group of BIC teens. The service was healing and uplifting, and it gave us both the mental and spiritual space to take action now. We ended with the BIC Green Team Task Force theme song "Tikun Olam."

A well-attended Oneg followed services, with lots of schmoozing and sweets.

Save the Date: Our next community-wide climate action Shabbat services and potluck will be hosted by Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation on February 14 at the Jewish Community Center, with services beginning at 10 a.m. The details are to follow on JLive. *You* are all invited! For further information about the A2J Climate Circle or to get your Jewish organization involved, please email info@a2jclimatecircle.com. ■

Ann Arbor's Sustainable Energy Utility: The future of energy lives here

By Shoshannah Lenski, City of Ann Arbor Executive Director, Sustainable Energy Utility

Shoshannah Lenski

I have always felt most connected to Jewish tradition through *teva*, or nature. I suspect I owe that connection to childhood summer camp, where daily services were held outdoors, under a canopy of lush trees, sitting on rustic wooden benches, and accompanied by the sounds of our fellow creatures (sometimes the bleat of a goat from the small farm, more often the buzz of mosquitoes.) There are many ways to "repair the world," but for me, tikkun olam feels like a call to protect this precious earth that humanity, and all life, depends upon. It is a privilege for me to be able to engage in that work not just personally, but also professionally as the executive director of **Ann Arbor's brand-new Sustainable Energy Utility (SEU)**.

The energy sector is responsible for 75% of global greenhouse gas emissions, so transforming it is at the heart of climate action and building a sustainable future. In November 2024, Ann Arbor voters overwhelmingly supported the creation of the SEU, a new and unique form of municipal energy utility. The SEU will offer City residents, businesses, and institutions access to clean, local energy, including rooftop solar with battery storage and neighborhood-scale geothermal systems for heating and cooling. These energy systems will be owned, installed, and maintained by the SEU, with customers simply paying for the energy through a monthly bill. This model can enable access for families that might not otherwise be able to invest in clean energy, such as renters or homeowners who aren't sure how long they'll stay in their current house. It also works well for organizations — like congregations — who can live their values, lower their energy bills, and build resilience so everything from religious services to community services can continue uninterrupted during grid outages.

Turning the SEU from the vision it is today to a fully operating utility in the next 12 to 18 months is going to take the efforts of the whole kehillah, the community. Ann Arborites can help by registering an "expression of interest" at a2seu.com and telling friends, neighbors, and fellow congregants about the SEU. The future of energy lives here, and with it, we can have a beautiful future for *teva* too! ■

The choices we make for the one home we have

By Rabbi Josh Whinston, Temple Beth Emeth

Probably the best-known Jewish teaching on the climate crisis comes from Kohelet Rabbah, a collection of midrashim on Ecclesiastes. In Kohelet Rabbah 7:13, we read:

"When the Holy One blessed be God created Adam, the first human being, God took Adam and showed him all the trees in the Garden of Eden. God said: 'See My creations, how beautiful and exemplary they are. Everything I created, I created for you. Make certain that you do not ruin and destroy My world, for if you destroy it, there will be no one to mend it after you.'"

There is something gentle yet piercingly true about this midrash. We are invited to imagine God and Adam on a walk through this new home, God pointing out the wonders of creation, Adam wide-eyed and speechless. At the end of the tour, God hands Adam the keys and makes a startling declaration: from this moment forward, humanity is responsible. God, in infinite power and majesty, steps back, and Adam, that is, human beings, become the caretakers.

Kohelet Rabbah was composed between the sixth and eighth centuries, yet its moral clarity feels totally modern. Long before the hum of factories, the haze of smog, or the first plastic bottle, our sages understood something essential about human nature: the power to create is shadowed by the power to destroy. They warned us that this world is breathtakingly beautiful, but also fragile, and singular. This is not a rehearsal. There is no spare Earth stored away for later.

Jewish tradition asks us to see stewardship not as a burden but as a spiritual calling. To care for creation is to respond to a sacred trust placed in our hands. Each choice we make about how we live can be a small but meaningful act of partnership with the Divine.

We are living in the moment our ancestors feared and imagined. The door has been opened, the keys are in our hands, and the tour is over. We have destroyed so much of this earth, but there is still time to repair some of what is broken. To honor creation is to honor its Creator; to protect this world is to protect the future entrusted to us. Our task is ancient and urgent, and it begins each day again with the choices we make for the one home we have. ■

Rabbi Josh Whinston

Lucinda Kurtz (reprinted from Ritualwell.org)

New Year of the Trees

Just when despair
almost overtakes us,
when bullets and bombs
bind our muscles
constrict our bodies and bones,
the new moon of Shvat appears
inviting us to dig deep inside
to find that nugget of faith
witness it sprouting
to reimagine the future.

In Shvat, we cross a threshold
into a mysterious realm
hidden within ourselves and
the deep interior of trees.
A stirring, even in frigid winter
Sap begins to rise
the new cycle begins.

On the full moon of Shvat,
we celebrate New Year of the Trees.
Renewal of life on fertile earth
awakens to divine flow of
vital energy from above
Streaming from the cosmic Tree of Life
down from roots in heaven
to re-create the fragrant, blooming world
minute by minute.

Can we return to the primal Garden
repair our transgression
find redemption
savor sacred fruit
nourishing and sweet?

In full view,
we bless the holy apple
to align ourselves
with the Source of all Blessings
to flourish and thrive.

Shvat is the month
to reconstellate ourselves,
discover secrets
we never knew,
delight
in honeyed tastes of
heavenly bliss,
where all people
are faces of the One.

TBE events in January

Events and services are both in person and/or virtual. Please see www.templebethemeth.org for full details, location information, and links.

Tot Shabbat Service & Dinner
Fridays at 5:45 p.m.
Join the Clergy to celebrate Shabbat with fun activities, stories, songs, and age-appropriate learning for children ages 0–5. Registration requested.

Elementary Shabbat Service & Dinner (every second Friday of the month)
Fridays at 5:45 p.m.
A short service, song session, and community building! Most appropriate for children ages 5–10 and their parents, grandparents, and other adults. Everyone is welcome! Registration requested.

Wine & Cheese Shabbat Reception
Fridays at 6 p.m. (except for the second Friday of each month)

Shabbat Service
Fridays at 6:30 p.m. (Every second Friday of the month is at 7:30 p.m.)

Saturday Shabbat service
Saturdays at 10 a.m.

Shabbat morning Torah study
Saturdays at 8:50 a.m.
Join us for this weekly discussion of the Torah portion.

Weekday morning blessings
Weekdays at 9:15 a.m.
Join TBE lay leaders each weekday morning for a short service of song, poetry, and meditation.

Twenty-five-minute mindfulness with Jewish spiritual director Linda Greene
Tuesdays at 8:30 a.m.
Zoom room opens at 8:15 a.m. for optional check-in. Blessing and intention setting 8:30–8:35 a.m. Meditate 8:35–9 a.m. Start your day centered and connected.

Queer Torah Study
Tuesdays at 7 p.m.
Join us on Zoom for a discussion of queer themes in the weekly Torah portion! Led by Ari Marcotte, Zelda Marcotte & Ari Smith. Guest leaders welcome! Contact Zelda (zeldamaybiz@gmail.com) for more information.

Back Door Food Pantry
Thursdays, 4 to 7 p.m.

Meditation with Claire Weiner
Thursdays at 5 p.m.
Join Claire Weiner for a 40-minute meditation session.

Weekly Mahj
Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m.
Wednesdays at 12:30 p.m.

WTBE Gift Shop Open
Friday at 5:30 p.m. (Every second Friday of the month is at 7:30 p.m.)
Washtenaw County's only Judaica Shop!

Jewish Book Club
Thursdays, January 8, 15, 22, 29, at 11 a.m.

Brotherhood Guys Night Out
Thursday, January 8, at 6 p.m.

Jewish Monsters & Magic II
Sundays, January 11 and 25, at 4 p.m.

WTBE Fiber Arts
Monday, January 12, at 7 p.m.

WTBE Historical Novel Reading Group
Wednesday, January 14, at 1 p.m.

Eastern European Trip Information Meeting
Wednesday, January 14, at 7 p.m.

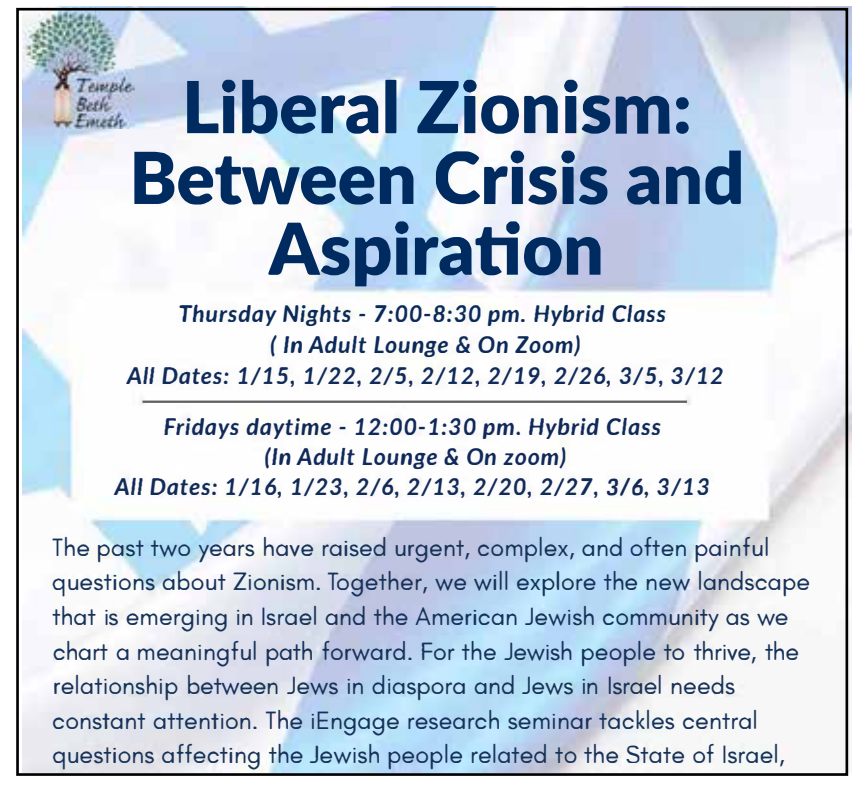
"Liberal Zionism: Between Crisis and Aspiration" Class
Thursday, January 15, at 7 p.m.
Friday, January 16, at 12 p.m.
Thursday, January 22, at 7 p.m.
Friday, January 23, at 12 p.m.

LGBTQ Shabbat Potluck
Friday, January 16, at 5:30 p.m.

Women's Rosh Chodesh Circle
Wednesday, January 21, at 5:30 p.m.

Choir Shabbat
Friday, January 23, at 6:30 p.m.

Renaissance Group Game Night
Saturday, January 24, at 7 p.m. ■



January at Beth Israel

Everyone is welcome to join Beth Israel for services, classes, and events. Services are being held in person and virtually, unless otherwise noted on the calendar. Below is a list of the links to participate virtually in services at Beth Israel. Beth Israel is live streaming services on the Beth Israel YouTube channel (Beth Israel Congregation AA MI). All links are also available on the Beth Israel homepage (www.bethisrael-aa.org). Please note that passwords are used. Contact the office to get the passwords at office@bethisrael-aa.org.

Camp Style Shabbat Honoring Grandparents
Friday, January 9, Service 5:45 p.m., Dinner 6:15 p.m.
Join us for a special Friday night service at 5:45 and a family-friendly dinner at 6:15 p.m. Rav Nadav will lead the service, with Rachael Lawrence-Lupton on guitar, and kids and grandparents on the bimah. Please register through the calendar on our website.

Barbara Stark-Nemon, *Isabela's Way* Book Talk
Sunday, January 11, at 2:30 p.m.
Barbara will discuss the book which highlights themes of refugees and refuge, and then Shrina Eadeh from Jewish Family Services will talk about the refugees in our area and the JFS RISE resettlement program, as well as the JFS book club. Bring a grocery card to benefit RISE participants. Coffee and light refreshments will be provided. See bethisrael-aa.org for more information. Sponsored by Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County.

Chavurat Nashim, Fellowship of Women, Each One, Teach One, Creative Edition
Wednesday, January 14, at 7 p.m.
Please come ready to learn some new creative endeavors from some of our own members! Coffee and snacks will be provided. Register in advance through our website. *If you are willing to teach a creative endeavor, please be sure to note that on the survey.

Aura of Kabbalat Shabbat
Friday, January 15, at 5 p.m.
A Jewish Renewal-inspired singing service led by Rabbi Aura Ahuvia. The choir, dubbed the "Holy Levites," will be holding a rehearsal at 5:30 p.m. leading right up to and seamlessly into services. All are welcome to attend.

Mitzvah Day — Lunches with Love Project
Sunday, January 18, at 10 a.m.
Join us as we work together with the seniors of Clarendale Ann Arbor to put together Lunches with Love for Food Gatherers. We will assemble bagged lunches, decorate the bags, write uplifting messages, and socialize with the seniors while we do good together! Please donate Meijer gift cards and the lunch items below. Drop off donations in the Beth Israel lobby January 5–January 18. All items must be non-expired, individually wrapped, with the original label and the list of ingredients on each item. Po- top soup or pasta meals, tuna or chicken salad lunch kits, dried fruit, applesauce, fruit cups, crackers, granola bars, popcorn, protein bars.

Special Guest Dvar Torah and Song by Shahanna McKinney Baldon
Saturday, January 24, 9:30 a.m.–12 p.m.
A pioneer of the national Jews of Color community, Shahanna McKinney Baldon has been an educator and Jewish diversity advocate and thought leader for over 25 years. This program is co-sponsored by the Network Jewish People of Color of Greater Ann Arbor with support from the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor Community Engagement Fund.

Sweatshirt & Soup Shabbat
Saturday, January 31, at 9:30 a.m.
Warm up on a cold winter's day! Wear your favorite college or camp sweatshirt to services and stay for a delicious soup lunch after.

Advanced Intro to Judaism
Sunday, January 11, at 1 p.m.
This year, Rabbi Caine is opening his popular "Intro to Judaism" course to Jews and the Jew-curious alike. Whether you're considering identifying with the Jewish people and wish to know more, or you have Jewish family and want to learn more, or perhaps you are already Jewish but either never went to "Hebrew School" or did but realize you only got the kid version! This biweekly course is for adults who are looking to learn anew or deepen their knowledge of the history, meanings, theologies, and practices of Judaism. What does it mean to read the Torah as an adult, develop a relationship with God and Jewish practices as an adult, see the world through a Jewish lens?

Tot Shabbat
Saturday, January 11 and 24, at 11 a.m.
Join us for a playful morning of Jewish songs and stories. Challah and grape juice kiddush included. For kids age one through first grade and parents, but all are welcome.

Theology Book Club — Online
Wednesdays at 7 p.m.
Beth Israel Congregation's Theology Book Club welcomes you to join them to read together and discuss books on Jewish thought and beliefs. The books are in English. Contact Paul Shifrin at (248) 514-7276 for more information.

In Person and Online Services

Minyan
Sundays at 9:30 a.m. in the M&M Chapel and online
Sundays–Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. online only

Friday Evening Services — in person and virtual
Kabbalat Shabbat Service at 5 p.m.

Shabbat Morning Services — in person and virtual
Saturdays at 9:30 a.m. ■

January Calendar

Always check websites or call for updates before planning to attend anything listed here.

Thursday 1

Friday 2
Candle Lighting 4:56 p.m.

Saturday 3 Vayechi
Havdallah 6:02 p.m.

Sunday 4

Monday 5

Tuesday 6

Wednesday 7
Yidish tish: (Virtual) (Yiddish Conversation & Reading Group, see above): Zoom. 2 p.m.

Thursday 8

Friday 9
Candle Lighting 5:03 p.m.

Saturday 10 Shemot
Havdallah 6:08 p.m.

Sunday 11

Monday 12

Tuesday 13

Wednesday 14
Yidish tish: (Virtual) (Yiddish Conversation & Reading Group, see above): Zoom. 2 p.m.

Thursday 15

Friday 16
Candle Lighting 5:11 p.m.

Saturday 17 Va'eira
Havdallah 6:16 p.m.

Sunday 18

Monday 19 Rosh Chodesh Shevet
Freedom Songs Sing-Along & Zine Art Workshop: Remembering Matasha Allen (z"l). At the JCC. 3 p.m.

Tuesday 20

Wednesday 21
Yidish tish: (Virtual) (Yiddish Conversation & Reading Group, see above): Zoom. 2 p.m.

Thursday 22

Friday 23
Candlelight 5:20 p.m.

Saturday 24 Bo
Havdallah 6:24 p.m.

Sunday 25
Jewish Storytime at the AADL. Pittsfield Branch. Register on JLive. 10:30 a.m.

Monday 26
EMU Center for Jewish Studies - Mike Rothschild: "Space Lasers and Conspiracies." 7 p.m.

Tuesday 27

Wednesday 28
Yidish tish: (Virtual) (Yiddish Conversation & Reading Group, see above): Zoom. 2 p.m.

Thursday 29
JCC Book Series: *Six Days in Bombay* with Alka Joshi. 6:30 p.m.

Friday 30
Candlelight 5:29 p.m.

Saturday 31 Beshalach
Havdallah 6:32 p.m. ■

Pardes Hannah events in January

January 3
Shabbat Morning Services. Pardes Hannah. In person and online. 10 a.m.

January 17
Study Session & Chanukah Celebration. Pardes Hannah. In person and online. 3 p.m.

January 18
Rosh Chodesh Circle. Pardes Hannah. Online only. 7 p.m.

Jewish Cultural Society in January

Shabbat, January 9th, 6:30 p.m. at the JCC

All are invited to join the JCS on January 9th at 6:30 to welcome Shabbat. Dinner from a local restaurant follows a short observance that includes secular readings, songs, candle lighting, wine, and challah. Children are welcome. Dinner is free for JCS members. The cost of dinner for non-members is $10/person or $25/family. Advanced registration on our website is available to help with planning: www.jewishculturalsociety.org 6:30 pm at the Jewish Community Center, 2935 Birch Hollow Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48108 ■

Remembering Ester

By Nomi Joyrich

November 26, 2025

Ester was my mom's best friend from childhood, and her only childhood friend who survived the Nazi Holocaust.

They were neighbors in Radom, Poland. When they were eight years old, Jews were no longer allowed to attend school. My grandparents and Ester's parents hired a teacher so the two girls could continue learning while living in the ghetto. My grandfather was taken to Auschwitz and murdered fairly early in the war.

Ester and her parents and my grandmother (Nanny) and mom were taken to various concentration camps. I don't know the details of where Ester and her parents were during the war. But eventually, Nanny, Mom, Ester, and her mom were reunited in Auschwitz-Birkenau. They were in the same barrack in Birkenau.

Six weeks before the end of the war, Count Bernadotte helped Sweden broker a deal where Sweden provided some food and blankets in exchange for the release of a certain number of women and children prisoners. The "white busses" (Swedish Red Cross) came to Birkenau and filled up with as many prisoners as they could fit. Ester, her mom, Nanny, and Mom were in the last barrack to be rescued. They ended up in a refugee camp on Visingo — a small island near Stockholm. I am not sure where Ester's dad spent those years, but after the war he came to Stockholm. Ester's younger brother was killed by the Nazis. About a year and a half later, Mom and Nanny came to the United States. Ester and her parents remained in Sweden.

Refugee camp, Visingo, Sweden.

Mom and Ester always remained close. They wrote each other long letters. Their letters were filled with news of the family, conversations about world events, and stories of the war. As far as I know, Ester is the only person my mom ever talked to about the war. I always thought that these letters would be the basis of an amazing novel. I've long regretted that I didn't ask them both to save the letters for me.

Although my parents traveled the world, to the best of my knowledge, they only visited Ester and her wonderful husband one time. I have never understood this.

In 1995 my parents and I took a trip to Poland and retraced all the places where Mom and Nanny had been. I wanted to complete the journey. And it was important to me to visit Ester while mom and Nanny were still alive.

So, when the rest of my family went home, I flew to Sweden. Ester and her husband Carl-Martin greeted me at the airport and I immediately felt at home. We stayed at their home in Stockholm and then we went to their farm. I loved it there. I remember all the blue glass that decorated their home. We went for long walks in the woods. Carl-Martin gave me antlers that he had found on the path. We spent our days walking the paths and talking. The three of us would talk all day and then Ester and I would stay up late after Carl-Martin went to sleep. It was a magical time for me that somehow seemed suspended in time and separate from the context of the rest of my life.

I was determined to find the refugee camp. Ester did not think I would find any remnant of it. But she drove me to the ferry to Visingo. I talked to older people in the hope that someone would remember it. Someone told me they thought there was an old school that might have been it. I rented a bicycle and rode around until I found it. A groundskeeper who barely spoke English showed me around. It was now a reform school for juveniles. He took me to the basement of a school building. On the wall there were a few old photos from when it was a refugee camp.

Ester wanted to come to my wedding, but Carl-Martin was no longer able to travel. That would have been her first visit. They sent us a blue glass bird and blue bowl. They reminded me of the blue glass from their farmhouse.

Mom and Ester wrote to one another until Mom died. Ester and I wrote after that. But we were not very good at keeping up with one another.

In 2017, after my youngest daughter's bat mitzvah, we wanted to take a big family trip. My kids had always heard stories about Ester. They both wanted our trip to include meeting Ester. I was so happy for my family and Ester to meet one another. The farmhouse had been sold even before Carl-Martin died, but her house was exactly as I remembered it. We had a lovely time together.

Aside from that one visit, Mom and Ester only communicated by letter. We arranged a Facetime call. It was as comical as you can imagine with two old ladies who had a limited grasp of technology. Eden and Ava tried to explain to Ester that she should look at the phone and not hold it to her ear. I can't remember who was with Mom helping her navigate the call.

My family went on to have an amazing vacation in nearby countries and then we went back to Stokholm so we could say goodbye to Ester. I told Ester I was afraid that something would happen to her and I would never know. She promised that she would give my contact information to a cousin and tell her to keep me informed. I cried when we parted and I knew that would likely be the last time I would see her.

Ester's cousin contacted me today. 11-24-25

The funeral was in Sweden, but my family lit a candle and said Kaddish together.

May Ester's memory be forever a blessing. ■

Mom, Ester, and Carl-Martin (Stockholm)

Obituaries

The WJN prints obituaries, memories, and eulogies free of charge for family members of Washtenaw Jewish community members as a service to the community and to honor the lives of those who have passed away. When local congregations send condolence notices to the WJN, the editor searches for obituaries online. Also, community members are invited to send obituaries to the editor.

Tanya Israel, a devoted educator, pioneering community leader, and beloved wife, mother, grandmother, and friend, passed away peacefully in Ann Arbor, Michigan. She was 89 years old.

Born in 1936 in New Haven, Connecticut, Tanya was raised in Wallingford, where she developed a lifelong love of learning and service. She attended Prospect Hill Day School, an all-female high school, which set the foundation for her academic journey at Wellesley College, an institution renowned for empowering women. Tanya's passion for education led her to pursue further studies, and after moving to Ann Arbor in 1961, she earned her M.A. in Education from Rackham in 1965, graduating with honors as a member of Phi Kappa Phi.

Tanya's early career reflected her deep commitment to children with special needs. She began as a counselor at the Connecticut Child Study and Treatment Home, working with emotionally and behaviorally disordered youth — a challenging role that she embraced with compassion and resilience. After marrying her beloved husband, Jerry, in 1959, she moved to Tacoma Park, Maryland, where she took advanced courses at the University of Maryland and began teaching special education at Broadacres Elementary. Her classroom for children with what is now known as ADHD was featured in the *Washington Post* for its innovative methods.

In 1961, Tanya and Jerry settled in Ann Arbor, where they built a loving home and welcomed three children. While raising her family, Tanya continued her studies in special education at the University of Michigan, arranging her class schedule to accommodate the needs of her young children. She received her special education master's degree in 1965 and then became a supervisor of student teachers in special education at Eastern Michigan University, shaping the next generation of educators with her wisdom and compassion.

Tanya's commitment to education extended far beyond the classroom. She was a dedicated public servant, serving multiple terms on the Ann Arbor School Board, beginning with her appointment in 1973. Over 13 years, she became a trusted advocate for special education, known for her accessibility to parents and teachers and her leadership on key committees. Tanya also served 16 years on the Washtenaw County Intermediate School District (WISD) Board of Education, including several years as President and Vice President, where she played a pivotal role in shaping educational policy and services across the region including the special needs programs offered at High Point.

A thoughtful supporter of the women's movement, Tanya embraced her own brand of feminism. She championed Title IX and the Equal Rights Amendment, and while she did not join formal protests, she rejected traditional limitations on women's roles. Tanya managed her household with remarkable skill, overseeing everything from budgets to repairs, and believed deeply in shared parenting and the importance of both partners' involvement in raising children — a perspective ahead of her time.

Tanya's professional life was marked by adaptability and innovation. In the 1980s, she developed a keen interest in computers, teaching programming to young people and adults at the Ann Arbor Recreation Department and InaCOMP Computer Center and even programming the swimming pool scoreboard at Pioneer High School. Her varied careers always centered around service and community impact, whether in education, technology, or public service.

Tanya was also active in the Jewish community as a member of both Temple Shir Shalom in Gainesville Florida and Temple Beth Emeth in Ann Arbor. She was also a member of Hadassah in both locations.

After retiring, Tanya embraced new interests, including bridge, Mahjong, exploring the world of computers, and participating in many book groups. Tanya also found a love for a "good walk spoiled," taking up golf when she and Jerry spent time in Gainesville, Florida. The time Jerry and Tanya spent in Gainesville was also especially meaningful to Tanya as her beloved mother Ruth Caplan relocated to Gainesville and Tanya was able see her every day and manage her care during her final years of life. She cherished time with her family and friends, continued her love of reading and puzzles, and remained a lifelong learner.

Tanya leaves behind a legacy of love, compassion, service, and a relentless pursuit of knowledge.

Tanya is preceded in her death by her mother Ruth (Rubin) Caplan and her father Louis Boyarsky and stepfather Jacob Caplan. She is survived by her beloved husband, Jerry; their children, Lewis, Laurie Israel Cubell (Allen) and Daniel (Molly); and her seven adored grandchildren, Josh, Haley and Allison Cubell and Matthew, Ryan, Rose, and Kate Israel.

A memorial service will be held to celebrate Tanya's remarkable life on January 17, 2025, beginning at 1 p.m., at Glacier Hills, in the Hanson Room, located at 1200 Earhart Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan. If you would like to participate either in person or virtually, please refer to the Muehlig Funeral Chapel (Ann Arbor) website for more details and to join the service through Zoom.

A memorial video in honor of Tanya's life may be accessed at this link https://youtu.be/-u2VRcxIpWk.

Donations can be made in Tanya's memory to either of the following organizations: The Glacier Hills Foundation (https://www.trinityhealthseniorcommunities.org/michigan/glacier-hills/about-us/foundation/donate-online) or Malan Syndrome Foundation (https://malansyndrome.networkforgood.com/projects/145148-malan-syndrome-foundation).

Tanya Israel's life was a testament to the power of education, the importance of community, and the enduring strength of love. She will be deeply missed by all who had the privilege of knowing her.

Dr. Daniel M. Kluger passed away November 20, 2025, at the age of 57, leaving behind a life marked with compassion for others, a strong commitment to Judaism and learning, and love of family.

Dan was an Infectious Disease physician on the Peninsula for 25 years, first in private practice, and then with Riverside Medical Group. He trained at Baylor College of Medicine, New York University, Bellevue Hospital, and University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Dan had many passions and interests. He was a beekeeper, and for over 20 years he enjoyed the challenges and successes of this hobby. He tended his bees with care and pride, in hives he built himself. Woodworking, bread making, beer brewing, gardening, traveling, and tinkering with electronics all brought him joy. For years, Dan has been a regular at Rodef Sholom Temple's morning minyan.

Most of all, Dan loved his family. His work often kept him busy, especially with the many extra weekend shifts he accepted, yet he still made sure to find time for his wife Beth, and their children, Sam and Pearl. He was proud of what his children are doing and who they have grown to be. Family time was his greatest pleasure. The extended Kluger family Thanksgivings were a highlight Dan always looked forward to. He embraced Beth's family as his own.

Dan was born and grew up in Rochester, New York. His parents, Lois Jean (Brownstein) Kluger and Jacob N. Kluger, and beloved nephew, Aryeh Kluger, preceded him in death. He is survived by his wife Beth and their children, Sam and Pearl. He is also survived by his three brothers and sisters-in-law, Larry and Josie, Leo and Karin, and Avram and Dana, and by many nieces and nephews as well as great-nieces and great-nephews.

Dan was a patient, kind, gentle, informed, and completely humble man. He was an organ donor, and he would encourage you to be one, too. The funeral will be held on Sunday, November 23, 2025, at 10:30 a.m., Rodef Sholom Temple, 401 City Center Blvd., Newport News, Virginia, followed by gravesite burial at the Jewish Cemetery of the Virginia Peninsula, 1817 Kecoughtan Road, Hampton. A meal of consolation will immediately follow at the family home in Williamsburg. Donations may be made in Dan's memory to the Rodef Sholom Temple Endowment Fund or to the Southern Poverty Law Center. May

his memory be for a blessing.

Deborah S. Rubenstein, age 89, formerly of Springboro, Ohio, passed away Monday, December 8, 2025. Debbi taught elementary school in the NYC School System, and retired after 28 years of service. She was a member of Beth Abraham Synagogue, Sisterhood, former vice president of Women's League of Conservative Judaism, and a chairperson of the Torah Fund. Debbi was preceded in death by her beloved husband, Howard, and her sister, Marcia Liveran. She is survived by her daughter and son-in-law, Paula Rubenstein and Isaac Wong; sons and daughters-in-law, Douglas and Marla Rubenstein, and Stephen Rubenstein and Michele Leshan; grandchildren, Julia (Gordon) Kochman, Ryan (fiancé, Laura Drechsler) Rubenstein; and many other relatives and friends.

Memorial contributions may be made in Debbi's memory to the Torah Fund of the Women's League of Conservative Judaism https://www.wlcj.org/about/torah-fund/. ■

Simchas and Sorrows

The Washtenaw Jewish community sends condolences to the families of:

Marty Scott, brother of Deborah (Ralph) Katz, uncle of Naomi Katz and Rachel Katz (Aaron Struminger), and great-uncle of Leah. Monday, November 10, 2025.

Daniel Kluger, brother of Avram Kluger, November 20, 2025.

Deborah S. Rubenstein, mother of Stephen Rubenstein, on the death of his mother, December 8, 2025.

The Washtenaw Jewish community sends mazel tovs to:

Debra and Lev Linkner, grandparents of Lionel Albert Linkner, born October 13, 2025, to parents Alexander and Jill Linkner.

Karen Shill and Henry Beitz and Merton Shill on the birth of their granddaughter, Poppy Eleanor, daughter of Jaime Braverman and Greg Shill and sister to Sadie Rose.

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